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Provincial.
Very Rev F. M. Driscoll O.S.F.
with affectionate regards
F. M. Steele O.F.
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DEVOTION TO MARY

HER FIRST CLAIM

1. According to the remark of a famous writer,[1] the greatest privilege of Mary, after her Divine Maternity, is that of her Immaculate Conception.

If this be so, then the feast of the Immaculate Conception is her greatest feast next after the Annunciation.

To us Americans this festival has a special significance, by reason of the fact that the Church in the United States has, by a solemn act of our clergy and people and with the cordial sanction of the Holy See, been placed under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary with this most beautiful of her titles. This gives me an occasion to address you to-day on the important subject of Devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

2. What are Mary's claims to our devotion—to that singular reverence, love, and confidence in which she is held by all who worthily bear the name of Catholic?

Mary is worthy of our devotion, first of all, by reason of *the greatness of her graces and her dignity in the hierarchy of beings.*

[1] Canon Sheahan.

After Almighty God and the Sacred Humanity of Jesus Christ, there is no being so great as Mary. It is true, she is a pure creature, and, therefore, far and away beneath the Supreme Being. But she is a creature so holy and so perfect that she is incomparably superior to all other creatures. She is above not only patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, but she is above angels, archangels, thrones, dominations, cherubim, and seraphim, and she stands alone on a pinnacle of greatness and perfection far in advance of the rest of creatures.

This greatness of Mary commenced at the first instant of her existence with the privilege of her Immaculate Conception.

At that moment she was "full of grace," and her soul was endowed with all celestial gifts, the most precious and noble. She possessed a perfect faith, a firm hope, an ardent charity, a profound humility, a purity superior to that of the angels. It was of her the prophet sang when he said that "her foundations [beginnings] were laid on the holy mountains." No stain of original sin ever sullied her pure soul, and it was this particular privilege that separated Mary from all the rest of the children of Adam. She was the only one who was exempt from the universal curse that had fallen on the whole human race; and that might be said of her which King Assuerus said to his dear Esther: "This law was made for all others, but not for thee."

Mary, according to the interpretation of the Fathers of the Church, is that mysterious cloud seen by

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the prophet Elias which, "though it rose out of the sea, yet had contracted none of the bitterness of its waters." "She is a rose sprung from a thorny stem." "The Lord possessed her in the beginning of her ways," as the Church sings of her, and "she was never under the power of the serpent," whose head she came to crush in giving a Redeemer to the world.

Hence the Spouse in the Canticles seems never wearied with singing the praises of her charms. "Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee." "As the lily among the thorns, so is my love among the daughters. . . . How beautiful thou art, my love; how beautiful thou art! Thy cheeks are fair as the turtle-dove's; thy neck, as jewels. Thy voice is sweet, thy face is comely." "One is my love, my perfect one is but one." "Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, brilliant as the sun, terrible as an army in battle array. The daughters of Zion saw her and called her blest, and the queens declared her praises, and as the days of spring they shed around her flowers of roses and lilies of the valleys."

3. But illustrious as was the Immaculate Conception of Mary, her birth was an event no less illustrious.

I could recount many glorious circumstances in connection with Mary's manifest entrance into the world. I could say that she was great according to worldly notions; since she was descended from men the most renowned in all antiquity and counted among her ancestors patriarchs, and prophets, and chiefs

of the people of God, and kings of the ancient law. But let me confine myself to supernatural advantages, and say that her birth was a prodigy of the power of God, where nature performed only a secondary part. It was from a sterile mother, and one, moreover, beyond the child-bearing age, through the miraculous intervention of God, that this incomparable Virgin sprang. Her birth was represented beforehand by many figures, announced by prophets, desired for many ages by the human race, and demanded with much ardor.

Hers was a birth awaited as the near sign of the deliverance of the human race. And it was this expectation that induced the Church to regard Mary as the rising dawn—a very natural comparison. For, as the dawn precedes and announces the coming of the sun, dissipates the darkness of the night, drives away wild beasts, consoles the sick and rejoices all nature; so Mary went before and announced Jesus Christ, "the Sun of Justice," who dissipated the darkness of the world by the light of His Gospel, chased away the wild beasts, that is to say, the devils, consoled and cured the spiritually and corporally sick, and brought an abundance of graces and blessings to the whole world.

4. But let me come to the crowning point—the supreme degree in Mary's greatness. This is her divine maternity, which was the source and principle, the cause and end of all her glory. Here it is that our thoughts lose themselves in admiration. Here it is that we come upon an ocean and an abyss where

the mind of man sees nothing. And it is true to say that the maternity of the most blessed Virgin is a mystery no less incomprehensible than is the Incarnation of her Son. In fact, Mary by that great and prodigious event, became the mother of a Son, almighty, eternal, immense, infinite in all perfections; of a Son who possesses the same Divinity as the Father and the Holy Ghost. By it she contracted a strict alliance with the adorable Trinity—being made the daughter of the Father, the Mother of the Son, the Spouse of the Holy Ghost. By it she acquired a maternal superiority over Him who is "King of Kings, and Lord of Lords." By it she contained in her bosom Him in whom are contained "all things visible and invisible." By it she became a mother without ceasing to be a virgin, and her happy fecundity only consecrated and increased her purity.

By it she sees herself raised incomparably above all the saints and elect of God; above angels and archangels; above thrones and dominations; above principalities, and powers, and virtues, and cherubim, and seraphim. For she acknowledges above her only the Godhead and the Sacred Humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

By this admirable maternity she is become cooperator in the Redemption of the human race. For, it was she who nourished and prepared the holy Victim, who was offered to the Eternal Father in expiation of our sins. From her were derived the Precious Blood which was shed upon the cross for our salvation, and the adorable Body which, after

having been made the price of our Redemption, is become the nourishment of our souls in the Holy Eucharist.

See to what a height of glory Mary is raised by the mystery of the divine maternity. The Fathers of the Church, considering this supreme greatness, seem lost for words to express their thoughts; and even the Church cannot find terms strong enough to express her admiration. She says in the words of the Canticle that Mary is "chosen as the sun"; "comely as Jerusalem"; "the perfect one of the Beloved." She assures us that Mary is the woman whom St. John saw in heaven, "clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars." She styles her "Mirror of Justice," "Seat of Wisdom," "Vessel of Honor," "Ark of the Covenant," "Gate of Heaven," "our life, our sweetness, and our hope."

O dearly beloved, let us cultivate a lifelong and tender devotion to Mary, who is the honor of our race and the beloved of her God. Let this devotion be manifested by a loyal and tender service offered her at all times, but especially on her festivals such as this; that so we may render ourselves worthy of her love and patronage, and merit the approval of our God to whom she is so dear.

1. To Mary's greatness corresponds perfectly her power. This power is founded on the alliance which she contracted, by her maternity, with the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. By this alliance, as I have said, she is become the Daughter of the Eternal Father, the Mother of the Son, the Spouse of the Holy Ghost.

If King Assuerus commanded Esther, his dear spouse, to ask of him whatsoever she desired, adding that nothing would be refused her, even if she should ask half of his kingdom; if Bethsabee, the mother of Solomon, on entering into his council-chamber to ask a favor, was saluted by him with profound respect; if he came down from his throne to meet her and had her seated on a throne beside his own; what can we think of the power that Mary has with God?

She is the Mother, the Daughter, the Spouse, not of a mere potentate of this world. She is the Daughter of the Almighty Father, the Creator and preserver of all things. She is the Mother of Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, the Saviour of the world. She is the Spouse of the Holy Ghost, who is God alike with the Father and the Son. Can she not then say with some proportion what her adorable Son said to His Apostles on the eve of His departure from

this world: "All power is given Me, in heaven and on earth."

I do not mean to say that the power of the Blessed Virgin is infinite, as is that of our Blessed Saviour. I know that it is limited, relative, dependent; but I know also that it is very great and beyond all that we can conceive. For if God grants, even in this life, so great a power to His servants; if they have the keys of life and death in their hands, so to speak; if they command nature, and nature, like a willing child, obeys them; if they restore sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, life even to those slumbering in the tomb; if the Saviour tells us in the Gospel that those who shall have a firm faith will perform miracles as great as those He Himself performed, nay, even greater ones; what can we think of the power that He grants to His most holy Mother, whom He loves incomparably more than all the saints, and who by her greatness and merits surpasses them beyond all that we can conceive?

2. Besides, it can be said that our Lord is bound, not only by His goodness and liberality, but also by His justice, to refuse nothing to Mary by reason of what she is to Him, and of what she has done for Him. What is Mary to Him? She is truly His Mother. It was she who contributed the pure and holy matter out of which His sacred Body was formed. And when the Saviour contemplates His Sacred Humanity to-day, seated on the throne of the Godhead—that Humanity, the instrument of so much glory to Him, the medium of His triumphs over death and hell, and

the object of the everlasting adoration of the saints; is He not filled with gratitude to her who by her maternity contributed to that glory? He is then her true Son, and in this quality what does He not owe her?

But what has not this good Mother done and suffered for Him? She bore Him for nine months in her virginal bosom with infinite reverence. She nourished Him from "her fountains filled from heaven." She procured for Him all the necessaries of life during His infancy and early childhood. When His life was sought by a cruel king, it was she who took him at dead of night and fled to a far-off country, there to draw out months, perhaps years of exile and hardship for His dear sake. How did she not press Him to her heart when a Child and imprint on His forehead a thousand kisses. When growing up, she took Him on her lap and taught Him eternal wisdom, His first lessons of childhood. She raised His infant hands in prayer to the Eternal Father—those hands that were one day to be lifted on the Cross for the redemption of the world.

It was she whose tender soul was pierced with the sword of grief as she sought Him during His three days' absence in the temple. It was she who followed Him faithfully and ministered to Him during the three years of His public ministry. What shall I say? She was with Him in spirit throughout His mournful agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, the one support that earth or Heaven offered Him in that dreadful hour, when His Father "laid on Him

the iniquities of us all." She was present in Pilate's hall when His inhuman executioners lashed Him till His Blood bespattered the pavements of that court of iniquity. She followed Him on the road to Calvary and supported Him in His sufferings by her sympathy.

And when, at last, the ever memorable tragedy was drawing to a close, the Gospel takes care to tell us that "beneath the Cross stood Mary, the Mother of Jesus," to receive His last sigh and die with Him by the violence of her sympathetic agony. Oh, yes, dear Mother Mary, Jesus Christ alone can understand the ardent love that burned in your bosom. He alone can fathom the depths of those mysterious sorrows that surged in your capacious heart throughout the dreadful period of His Passion. He alone can know fully all that you did and suffered for His sake during the course of His most holy life.

And can this tender and generous Son prove unmindful of all those sacrifices made for His sake? Being infinitely liberal, does He not make a return to this good Mother, aye, a return which is in some manner without limits?

O my brethren, words fail me here, and all I can say is that the power of Mary with her Son is above all that we can imagine or conceive.

3. What do the Fathers of the Church tell us on this subject? Sometimes they style Mary the mediatrix between God and man. It is not, indeed, that she exercises this great quality in the same sense as does her adorable Son. For He alone is the Mediator

of our Redemption, who purchased us from the power of the devil at the cost of His precious life.

But, Mary is the mediator of intercession, who, by her prayers and influence with her Son, obtains for us whatever she asks. For, as St. Bernard remarks, "We have need of a mediator with the Mediator Jesus Christ, whose sympathies, being God, are all divine." And He, our God, being a "consuming fire," according to the words of Scripture; Mary intercedes with Him for us by her gentle influence and screens us poor sinners from the scorching wrath of God.

At other times they say that she is the co-operator of the Redemption, because she furnished the Precious Blood which was shed by our Redeemer, and nourished and prepared the holy Victim who was immolated on the Cross for the expiation of our sins.

Again, they assure us that she is the channel of all graces, and that her Son grants them ordinarily only through her. Hence, is she compared to the neck. For, as it is through the neck that all life descends from the head to the body; so we who are the mystical body of which Jesus Christ is the Head, receive life, the supernatural life of our souls, only through the medium of Mary. Once again, they assure us that it is morally impossible for a true servant of Mary to perish. You all remember; yes, and I assume you all repeat, many times a day, the lovely prayer of St. Bernard which is given in all our prayerbooks: Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who

fled to thy protection, implored thy help, and sought thy intercession, was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother! To thee I come; before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate! despise not my petitions, but, in thy mercy, hear and answer me. Amen.

1. But to Mary's greatness and power there is added a third claim on our reverence and devotion; and this is her love for us, which makes her employ the one and the other solely in favor of us, her children. Yes, Mary loves us dearly; for we cost her a great deal, and we were made her children in the most favorable conjuncture that ever was. For, whilst she stood at the foot of the Cross on which Jesus was transfixed, the dying Saviour commended us all to her in the person of St. John, saying: "Woman behold thy son." And in that same eventful hour He made known to us our future relations to her, when, turning to the beloved disciple, He addressed him, saying: "Behold thy Mother." What sentiments of love, esteem, and veneration ought not those last words of the dying Saviour, addressed to each of us, inspire us with towards this tenderest of mothers, and how ought we not look up to her with sentiments of filial piety and confidence? And what impression did they not make on her who loved us so much already, and who sacrificed so much for our sake, even to the giving her Jesus to the death of Calvary to purchase us to life? And what must not be her eagerness to succor us when she sees us poor, afflicted beings, exposed to a thousand dangers, and in evident

danger of perishing? Yes, Mary has an inconceivable tenderness for us. Her goodness is unequalled. She breathes only mercy.

2. What continual proofs of her love and protection have we not? and this is the last argument I shall adduce in proof of the gratitude, respect, and devotion we owe her.

How many prodigies has she not wrought in all times and places since the beginning of the Church? How many sick and infirm cured? How many blind restored to sight? How many dead restored to life? How many sad accidents averted? How many public calamities arrested? And must we not agree that it is her powerful mediation before God that withholds His avenging arm from chastising sinners as they deserve? Without her powerful protection, how could the world subsist, flooded as it is with crimes? How many spiritual favors does she not obtain every day for those who are devoted to her? How many great sinners converted? How many just sustained in good practices? How many of every age and sex and condition who have attained salvation through her means? Ah, if each one of us reflects, how many graces, spiritual and temporal, will he not recollect to have received through the intercession of this best of mothers?

3. Let us, therefore, honor Mary with profound respect and devotion, and look up to her for protection on all occasions of trial and danger. Especially when temptation is nigh, and ruin threatens us on all sides, let us cry to her for help, nor cease our

petitions till she mercifully deliver us. For Mary is indeed the ark of salvation to all, the one guiding star of life set over the stormy sea of this world to guide us poor tempest-tossed mariners to the port of salvation. And it is in this guise she is saluted by the saints and by the Church, as we read in her office. "O all you," says St. Bernard, "who perceive yourselves tossed on the turbid ocean of this world amidst storms and tempests; turn not away your eyes from this shining star, if you would not be overwhelmed. If the winds of temptation arise; if you encounter the rocks of tribulation; turn to this star; call upon Mary. If you are cast upon the waves of pride; if, of envy; if, of ambition, look to the star; call upon Mary. If gusts of anger or sensual passion strike against the frail bark of your soul; turn to Mary. If you are horrified at the enormity of your crimes; if you are confounded at the filth of your conscience; if you begin to fall into the abyss of despair; if you are terrified at the thought of judgment; think of Mary; call upon Mary. Let her name not depart from your mouth, nor her thought from your heart; and that you may obtain the fruit of your prayers, try to copy her virtues. Following her, you will not go astray. Praying to her, you will not despair; accompanying her, you will not fail; under her protection you must succeed; so that each one may know by his own experience how efficacious to all is devotion to Mary.

GRACES OF MARY'S NATIVITY

1. We celebrate to-day the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is a feast of much solemnity in the Church and one to which there has been, from the earliest times, a great and widespread devotion throughout Ireland. As a proof of this latter statement I have need only to point out to you the number of churches and parishes throughout the country dedicated to the Blessed Virgin under the title of her blessed Nativity. I will be in harmony with the time, therefore, in addressing you in this discourse on the miraculous Nativity of Mary.

And at the outset, does it not appear singular that of all the feasts celebrated throughout the year to the memory of the saints, only two are held to commemorate their entrance into life—the one, the feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist; the other, that of which I come to treat.

It is not thus that the world acts when it wishes to honor the memory of its illustrious men and women. When peoples and nations come together as one man to honor the memory of an illustrious citizen, it is not the day of his death they celebrate; nor yet, as a rule, the day on which he worked his greatest achievement. It is rather the day when as an infant he first saw the light, and entered on that

career which afterwards brought benefits to his fellow-men. Thus, we commemorate the centenary of the birth of an O'Connell, or a Washington, or a Lincoln, or some other of the great men whose deeds are cherished in the memory of the people.

But, ah, sad is the reason why the Church cannot commemorate the birthday of her illustrious children. For, the day of their birth is a day of sorrow to that tender mother; since we all come into the world affected with the stain of sin.

But thanks to the merciful providence of God, who from all eternity predestined the Virgin Mary to be the Mother of His only Son, it was not so with her. And by a wonderful prerogative of grace, the Lord created her alone of all the posterity of Adam free from the taint of original sin.

Moreover, the day of Mary's birth was one of joy and hope to the human race; since she came to reverse the curse of Eve and to usher into life the Redeemer of the world.

2. But have we any conception of the dignity and merit of Mary even at that early stage of her existence? To arrive at a just appreciation of them, we must consider two things; first, her greatness in the estimation of God, by reason of the privilege of her Immaculate Conception; and, secondly, the immense merits she treasured up during the nine months that heralded her visible advent among men.

As to the former, the Immaculate Conception is not to be looked upon as a mere negative privilege, consisting in Mary's exemption from original sin.

On the contrary, she by it was gifted with the most wonderful prerogatives and graces. And, first, her Creator endowed her with a soul whose natural perfection was the glory of creation and the masterpiece of almighty workmanship. Add to this that He endowed her with a perfection of grace and sanctity far exceeding that of the greatest saint or brightest archangel. As a consequence, she was higher in the estimation of God than all the rest of creatures. Her sinlessness, moreover, and intense love of God, even at that instant gave her an immense advantage over all others. Far beyond the point where all others terminated their career of sanctity, the sanctity of Mary began. For the consummation of holiness in creatures is the attainment of perfect sinlessness, and of the most ardent and perfect love of God. And Mary commenced with an intensity of love and a sinlessness of soul far outshining that of the most glorious of the saints or angels. And, hence, the Fathers of the Church, speaking of her glorious Conception, apply to her the words of the Psalmist, "*Fundamenta ejus in montibus sanctis*— The beginnings of her virtue were laid on the holy mountains." Hence, also, they remark, the Spouse in the Canticle, who is none other than the Holy Spirit Himself speaking through His Church, seems never wearied with singing the praises of her charms: "Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee. As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters. . . . How beautiful thou art, my love, how beautiful thou art. Thy cheeks are fair

as the turtle-dove's; thy neck as jewels. Thy voice is sweet. Thy face is comely. One is my love; my perfect one is but one. Who is she that cometh forth as the dawn, fair as the moon, brilliant as the sun, terrible as an army in battle array?"

3. If such were the glorious beginnings of the Mother of God; if, by the privilege of her Immaculate Conception, she was raised inconceivably above all other creatures; what sanctity must not have been hers, what a degree of perfection and merit with God must she not have attained at the period of her blessed Nativity? For we must remember that it was not with her as with the rest of the posterity of Adam. With Mary there was no infancy, speaking in the ordinary sense of the word, no period antecedent to the time when the light of reason shone within her soul. From the first instant of her existence the glorious sun of perfect intelligence, illustrated by the supernatural light of faith, played upon her gifted soul, illuminating her and warming her with the knowledge and love of God, and enabling her with the most perfect facility to see her relations and her duties as a creature to the infinite and eternal Creator.

Add to this that it was not with her as with the rest of us, who are held down with the weight of our infirmities and passions. She felt no opposition from her inferior nature, as we do. There was in her no warfare between the spirit and the flesh, such as even the greatest of the saints were not exempt from. On the contrary, her whole inferior nature

was subordinated in the most admirable manner beneath the dominion of reason; mind and will yielded the most submissive obedience to the law of God; these, in turn, held in the most perfect submission all the powers and motions of her inferior nature; and thus she was enabled to give her undivided attention to the love and service of her God, and to employ every moment in producing acts of the most sublime virtues, to which corresponded merit untold to be laid up for her in the eternal mansions.

4. And here is another consideration that we must take into account in contemplating the glorious Nativity of Mary. Many great theologians lay it down as a principle that a soul which possesses a habit of virtue, as long as that soul corresponds faithfully with the actual graces which she receives from God, produces an act of the virtue equal in intensity to the degree of the virtue it is endowed with; and, as a consequence, it acquires each time it produces such an act a new measure of merit equal to the sum of all the merits previously acquired. I conclude then: Mary by her Immaculate Conception was created superior in virtue to all men and angels. From the first instant of her existence she was gifted with a most perfect intelligence. She corresponded most perfectly with every actual grace given her by God and employed every instant of her life in acts of the most sublime virtue; therefore, according to this principle of theology, she at the second moment of her existence doubled the sublime grace which she possessed at the beginning,

and at each succeeding moment doubled the grace which she was mistress of at each preceding moment of her life.

Who then shall compute the sum of Mary's merits at the glorious instant of her Nativity? Who shall describe the graces that adorned her soul at a period when all other children possess not a shred of merit, but, on the contrary, are worthy only of reprobation and abandonment by God.

It was this consideration that induced the Church, taught by the Spirit of God, to pay particular homage to Mary's Nativity, and to make this feast one of special solemnity and distinction among the feasts consecrated to the mystery of her miraculous life. And was it not in keeping with the enlightened piety of our ancestors and of the saints who had such veneration from the Blessed Mother of God, to keep the anniversary of her birth as a day of special honor, to be commemorated by all the people with rejoicing —a day which in Ireland, for instance, was observed as a parochial holiday.

Let us also celebrate the anniversary of the birth of her who is the Mother of us all, in a manner becoming the great mystery commemorated, becoming the hope which the event engenders in us, and the traditional devotion of the Catholic people to the blessed Mother of God; that we may earn for ourselves her love and patronage throughout life, and transmit to those who come after us one of the characteristic devotions of the Saints of Erin.

THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION

"*And the angel said to her: Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David, His father, and He shall reign in the house of Jacob forever. And of His kingdom there shall be no end. . . . And Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.*" (*Luke i, 30–38.*)

1. We commemorate to-day a mystery, the greatest that has been accomplished since time began, the mystery, namely, of the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a mystery which God had prepared from all eternity, and which He has accomplished in time as the masterpiece of His wisdom and love.

If you ask me what was the purpose of this stupendous mystery, since with intelligent beings the end is the first thing that comes under consideration, I answer with St. Thomas: "It was in order that the Son of God might redeem us by His death upon the Cross." Of this Holy Scripture assures us, saying: "God so loved the world as to give for us His

only begotten Son." And the same answer the Church echoes in her creed: "Who for us men and for our salvation came down from Heaven, became Incarnate by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and was made Man."

Now, in the consideration of this mystery three great truths present themselves to us—truths so great, mysteries so redolent of the wisdom and goodness of God, that not even eternity is sufficient to fully comprehend their greatness; and these are—the abasement of the Divine Word; the exaltation of Mary; and the love of God for us—a love which has devised this abasement and this exaltation solely for our benefit.

2. How great was the abasement of the Divine Word in the Incarnation no human tongue can declare, no created mind can conceive. St. Paul, in an effort to describe the depth of the abasement, says that the Son of God "emptied Himself, taking the form of man." And no better description could be given; for the Divine Word truly divested Himself of all but His Godhead in assuming our nature. And St. John, treating of the same mystery, after giving a noble description of the Word, or Son of God, "who," he says, "was from all eternity in the bosom of the Father, and was Himself the very God, the Creator of the universe, and was in possession of a glory such as belongs only to the Only Begotten of the Father"—St. John, I say, makes a paradox in saying that "the Word was made flesh."

Dearly beloved, thought cannot bridge the abyss

that yawns between the greatness of God, on the one hand, and the littleness of man, on the other. Only the description of the Apostle can suffice: "God emptied Himself." He emptied Himself of His greatness; of His dignity; of His happiness; of His riches; of His glory, in taking the form of man. He emptied Himself even to the taking upon Himself all our miseries, except ignorance and sin. There is no form of weakness, or want, or infirmity, or persecution, or sorrow, which the Son of God did not subject Himself to as man. "For, we have a High Priest who was tempted in all things like us, yet without sin," says St. Paul. And if it was forbidden the Son of God to take upon Himself the character of personal sinfulness, yet would He charge Himself with the obligation of paying the penalty of our sins. The irreconcilable enemy of sin takes it upon Himself to resemble the sinner, to pass for a sinner, to be treated as a sinner, to die as a sinner. Oh, abyss of humiliation well calculated to cure us of our pride! Unfathomable love of a God, who annihilates Himself in becoming Man, in order that He might suffer and die for man! Oh, let us adore Jesus Christ annihilated in the Incarnation for our sake; and let us further imitate His annihilation by humbling ourselves on account of our past sins!

3. But if the Son of God could not abase Himself lower than He did in the Incarnation, Mary could not be lifted to a greater height of dignity and honor than that to which the Incarnation raised her. This the words of the angel make known to us. "Be-

hold," says he, "thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be (called) the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God, shall give unto Him the throne of David, His Father, and He shall reign in the house of Jacob forever; and of His Kingdom there shall be no end. . . . And the mystery shall be accomplished in this manner: the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And, therefore, the Holy that shall be born of thee shall be (called) the Son of God."

Could greater honor be conferred on a creature? By the Incarnation Mary is raised to the quality of Spouse of God, who associates her to His own immortal fecundity in order to cause her to engender in time the same Son whom the Father had begotten from all eternity. She is raised to the rank of Mother of God, who wishes to owe to her His temporal existence, and to give her over His august Person all the rights and all the advantages of a mother. She is raised to the quality of Temple of God—temple beloved, temple adorned with all gifts, and worthy dwelling-place of the Divinity, who takes up His abode corporally within her. What prodigious elevation!—elevation capable of attracting all our homage, and all our love and confidence. Let us, therefore, as the fruit of the contemplation of this mystery, reverence the ever Blessed Virgin Mary. And since God has been pleased to honor her beyond all thought and measure, and to raise her to a dignity ineffable,

let our praise, and our homage, and our love and confidence in Mary be great and boundless also.

4. And whilst we show our homage and love for Mary, let us pour forth unceasingly our gratitude to God, who devised both the abasement of His Son and her exaltation solely in favor of us; and this is the third great truth that comes before us prominently in contemplating the mystery of the Incarnation.

Yes, "God so loved the world as to give for its salvation His only Son." How great are the benefits we receive through the accomplishment of this mystery—benefits so great, gifts so wonderful, that greater, even at the hands of God, could not be conceived.

By means of it, first of all, we are given God as a Father. What an extraordinary change! "We were by nature," says St. Paul, "children of wrath." Well, from being "children of wrath" we become children of God by adoption. And this is what excited the admiration of St. John. "Behold," says he, "what manner of charity the Father hath for us that we should be called and should be in reality the children of God." And if children, why, "heirs also," says St. Paul; "heirs of God and co-heirs with Jesus Christ."

By means of the Incarnation, again, we are given in Jesus Christ a Saviour. We have henceforth a Victim and a Liberator who comes to satisfy for us, and to acquit us of our debts by paying for them in His own Person.

The mysteries of the Incarnation and of the Cruci-

fixion form, as it were, but one episode—"The Son of God made Man in order to redeem the world." The work of the Redemption was begun at the Incarnation. The second birth of the human race took place on Calvary.

By means of the Incarnation, finally, we are given in Mary a mother to replace our first mother, Eve, who had by her folly brought destruction on her whole posterity. We should have all been lost if a second woman had not been found to restore to life those whom the first woman had plunged into the abyss of death. It is through the Incarnation that the Mother of Jesus Christ is made the "Mother of all the living." It is for them that she attracts, that she conceives, that she carries in her chaste womb the "Fruit of Salvation."

Oh, how beneficent to us the mystery of the Incarnation; and how capable of gaining for Jesus Christ the gratitude of our hearts and all our love!

Let it be our unceasing duty to aspire after, to strive for, and to merit the benefits offered to us through this mystery.

THE VISITATION

"And Mary rising up in those days went into the hill-country with haste, into the city of Juda. And she entered into the house of Zachary and saluted Elizabeth," etc. (*Luke i, 39–56.*)

1. These words, taken from St. Luke's Gospel, announce to us the second great event in our Blessed Lady's life that has immediate reference to the great scheme of our Redemption; that of her visit to her cousin, St. Elizabeth. It is an event so striking and so full of mysterious graces that the founder of the Rosary selected it as one of the mysteries of that great prayer. As we celebrate to-day the feast commemorating this event, I wish to lay before you some thoughts that will help you to reflect profitably on the mystery.

Now this mystery and the graces that accompany it may be looked on as the immediate sequence of the Incarnation, and the firstfruits of sanctification effected through means of the corporal presence of the Saviour among men.

And, just as in the Incarnation three great truths present themselves prominently before us; so in the Visitation three great effects of the workings of grace, particularly of the graces of the Incarna-

tion, are recalled to us: the charity of the Virgin in visiting her cousin, St. Elizabeth; the sanctification of St. John the Baptist, together with the spirit of prophecy infused into his mother; and the gratitude and humility of Mary as expressed in her sublime canticle of the "Magnificat."

2. How strikingly is not the charity of our Blessed Lady shown forth in the Visitation! No sooner does she learn from the angel that her cousin, St. Elizabeth, is in a delicate condition and needs her assistance, than she sets out to succor her. Neither the consideration of the disturbance to be occasioned in domestic arrangements by her long absence from home, nor the inconvenience of a tedious and perilous journey to the mountain country restrain her in her mission of love. She thinks only of the good she can effect in the house of Elizabeth; and this thought gives lightness to her feet, wings to her desire. She goes with haste impelled by the ardor of charity. She enters the house of Zachary. She salutes her aged cousin with words of congratulation and sympathy, and offers her her assistance and company during the anxious period that is before her. Nor does she leave her until she sees her happily delivered of the child of promise with which God had blessed her.

How admirable, dearly beloved, the charity of the Blessed Virgin! Let us strive to imitate it in our own conduct by succoring those who are in need; by compassionating the miserable; by opening our hearts and applying our hands to relieve all forms of dis-

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tress with a charity diffusive as hers, which recognizes in every human being a brother or a sister in Jesus Christ, to be treated with respect and tenderness, and to be aided according to the measure of our power and that neighbor's temporal or spiritual needs. And, oh, let the contemplation of Mary's tenderness and Mary's charity redouble our confidence in her, and make us look up to her in all the dangers that surround us in life. And we may be sure that she who is all-powerful as our advocate will not desert us, but will bring to our poor afflicted souls grace and sanctification.

3. Such were the results of Mary's visit to St. Elizabeth. Scarcely had she saluted her aged cousin, when mother and son feel at once the sanctifying effects of her benign presence. The child in the womb of St. Elizabeth is sanctified and exults for joy at the presence of Jesus; while at the sound of the Virgin's voice Elizabeth, his mother, is wrapped in prophecy, and, filled with the Holy Ghost, cries out: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb," and, "how have I deserved this happiness that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?"

Such are the ordinary effects of the presence of Jesus and Mary now as when they lived in the world —grace comes out from the One and flows to us through the other. Where Jesus and Mary are, there is sanctity effected. The mind is enlightened with divine truth; the heart is warmed with celestial love; the whole man is sanctified; and strength is given

to accomplish a glorious victory over our own passions and the power of our spiritual foes.

4. And now let us go on to remark on the third great effect of grace laid open to us in the mystery of the Visitation—the gratitude and humility of Mary as expressed in her lovely canticle "Magnificat."

These companion virtues of gratitude and humility God looks for in His servants, and when found in them, they draw down His complacency and His gifts. For the Almighty, who is ready to confer on us all manner of good things, will have all His gifts return to Him by gratitude; and His glory He will not part with by allowing us to attribute to ourselves through pride what belongs to Him alone. While pride and ingratitude, therefore, go hand in hand, and both repel grace from our souls; gratitude and humility, like golden keys unlock the treasury of heaven, and draw down upon us God's choicest gifts.

And how are not these virtues shown resplendently to dwell in Mary, as we learn from the sentiments expressed in her lovely canticle of thanksgiving? Forgetful of herself, of her dignity and greatness, she thinks only of returning thanks to God. Lowly in her own esteem, she gives all praise to Him to whom she attributes all her greatness and privileges. God had exalted her above all creatures. She thinks only of magnifying Him, her Benefactor. "My soul doth magnify the Lord."

The whole human race rejoices in her as Queen

and Patron. "Her spirit rejoices in God" alone, whom she calls "her Saviour." God had raised her to the highest dignity in His power in choosing her to be the Mother of His Son made Man. She, in her humility, looks upon herself as His lowly "handmaid." "All generations," she prophesies, "shall call me blessed." She attributes blessedness to God, whom she styles essential Holiness; "Holy is His name." "Great things," she acknowledges, "have been done in her." The glory of this she attributes to the Almighty. God's mercy, His power, His justice, His charity—all are praised in that sublime canticle, the beauty of which ravishes the intellect and enkindles the heart.

Let us learn from Mary's conduct in her supreme exaltation to attribute excellence to Him to whom alone it belongs; to preserve humility in the midst of the advantages God may have showered on us; to return unceasing thanks to Him for His many favors; that thus we may be found worthy of the frequent visits of Jesus and Mary to our hearts in this life, and of the invitation to come and live with them for all eternity in the next.

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"PREPARE YE THE WAY OF THE LORD"

"*In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being procurator of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee,*" *etc.* (*Luke iii, 1–6.*)

1. This Gospel passage, taken from the third chapter of St. Luke, has both a prophetic and an historic import. It concerned at once the Jews and the Gentiles, the two divisions that in the mind of the evangelist made up the races of mankind. The latter it informed that the God-Saviour lived in the most famous epoch of the world's history, the golden age of civilization and culture, when Rome for the first time in seven hundred years was enjoying profound peace on all her borders and ruled over the greater part of the then known world with undisputed sway. To the former it told that the period marked out for the coming of the Messias had arrived. The scepter had passed from the house of Juda. The kingdom itself of the Jews was parceled out into four tetrarchies or quarters, two of which were under the sway of the sons of the Idumaean upstart, Herod; while Judea itself acknowledged immediately the power of Rome, as represented by Pontius Pilate.

The double incumbency of the high priesthood,

moreover, only emphasized the more to the Jews their servitude to the Roman power, to whose imperial policy they were forced to bow.

It was at this time and in the circumstances above described that "the word of the Lord came to John, the son of Zachary, in the desert, and he came into all the country about the Jordan preaching the baptism of penance for the remission of sins." "Do penance," he said, "for the Kingdom of God is at hand." And he conferred the sacrament of washing as a symbol of a change of heart and of a turning away from sin.

2. But why preach penance at a time to which the Jews looked forward as an era of unbounded joy, when the Messias should come down and rule over them?

It is, dearly beloved, because penance alone unbosoms the affections, and prepares the soul for the reception of grace. For "the word is a seed," says our Lord. It must be received into a heart prepared and disposed beforehand for its reception. And just as the farmer ploughs up the soil and loosens it as a preparation for the reception of the seed, if he would expect a bounteous harvest; so must we plough up the soil of our soul by heartfelt contrition, and detach it from affection to creatures, if we would dispose it for the reception of grace.

This is indicated by the cry of the Precursor: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." Here the Baptist reminds the Jews at once of his office, and of the most famous and consoling of the prophecies; that,

namely, beginning at the fortieth chapter of Isaias, "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God. Speak ye to the heart of Jerusalem and call to her; for her evil is come to an end, her iniquity is forgiven. . . . The voice of one crying in the desert; prepare ye the way of the Lord. Make straight in the wilderness the paths of our God. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough ways plain, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh together shall see that the mouth of the Lord hath spoken." "I am," said he to the emissaries of the Jews, "neither Elias, nor the great prophet, nor He that is to come, but only His precursor—the voice of one crying in the desert. My mission is to call upon the people and to say to them in the words of the prophet Isaias, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight His paths; every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked ways straight and the rough ways plain.' " Here he makes use of the Hebrew future for the imperative. The meaning is: "Let every valley be filled, and every mountain and hill be made low, and let the crooked ways be made straight, and the rough ways plain."

3. But why this figurative language on the part of the Baptist, and what is the purport of the figure? Well, in earlier and less cultured times than those we have experience of, it was customary, when a king was about to make royal entry into one of the cities of his kingdom, to send heralds to announce his com-

ing, and to call upon the people to give him a reception worthy of his dignity; one of the chief acts of preparation was to lay out the public ways for the passage of his chariot. The depressions in the road were filled up, and the steep declivities were cut down; the ways, sometimes mere bridle-paths, were straightened out, and the obstacles removed, and the citizens themselves were invited to come forth and give him a royal welcome.

And so the Precursor, accommodating his language to the well-known usages of the time, and to the genius of the people, makes use of this exalted figure: "The long-expected Messias is at hand. He, the 'Lion of the tribe of Juda,' comes to take possession of His kingdom, of which there shall be no end. Prepare ye, therefore, for His worthy reception. This kingdom is within you. Prepare by penance for the entry of His grace into your souls. Let every depression in the way be filled up. Let all diffidence in the goodness of God, all sloth, every want of confidence and correspondence with His grace be laid aside. 'Let every mountain and hill be made low.' Let pride that lifts itself as a mountain to oppose the entry of grace be flattened out. Let all crookedness of deceit be straightened out by sincerity and candor, and let all natural defects that hinder the full working and fruition of grace be removed, and all men shall share in the fruits of the Redemption wrought by the God-Saviour."

4. Dearly beloved, in those days the Messias appeared in the flesh among His people. But to-day the

same God-Saviour is about to be born again for us and to make a mystic entry into our souls. He is to appear among us in the amiable form of the Babe of Bethlehem. Shall we not prepare the way of the Lord? Shall we not dispose our hearts to give Him a worthy reception? This is due to Him not only because He is our God, but also because of the purposes of His coming.

And first, He comes to be born for us. "Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was made Man." What dispositions does not this great "mystery of the love and goodness of God for men" demand of us? Mystery of love and goodness "which was manifested openly in the flesh" wherewith a God was clothed on account of our sins, and the accomplishment of which we are about to celebrate. Mystery of love and goodness, "through which the justice and holiness which were in God have been communicated to us"; "of which the angels" on that first Christmas morning "were the first witnesses," "the publication of which was made to the Gentiles," as when the Magi were called to worship at the crib: "the faith of which is spread throughout the earth; and which is now in heaven the object of our eternal happiness." (1 Tim. iii, 16.)

A second reason which ought to oblige us to celebrate this feast holily, and to render ourselves worthy of the graces which God imparts in this time to souls well prepared, is that the Son of God comes into the world to be born in our hearts and to convert them. "By this hath the charity of God appeared towards

us," says St. John, "because God hath sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we may live by Him,"—that is to say, that we might share in His divine life (1 John iv, 9). This is further shown in His condescension in taking on Himself the ways of men. If He whom the Scripture calls "the Great Lord" (Ps. xlii, 2) makes Himself little, it is for us. "A little one is born to us, and a Child is given us" (Is. ix, 6).

If He who is from eternity is made a Child, it is in order to draw us to Him by the sweet bonds and by the caresses of infancy—"you shall find the Infant." If He renounces His liberty—"you shall find Him wrapt in swaddling clothes"; it is to deliver us from the slavery of sin, and to give us the liberty of the children of God. If He sacrifices His honor and glory—"He is laid in a manger," it is to teach us to despise the honors and pleasures of the world. He comes to enter our hearts by grace and to grow in us to the full stature of Christian holiness and perfection.

5. "Prepare ye then the way of the Lord," for His triumphal entry into your hearts by grace. On Christmas eve we begin to carry out in thorough manner this great work of preparation. It is preeminently a day of preparation and renewal. Let every soul in this parish then come to Confession on that day, man, woman, and child, and let not one be wanting. "Make straight His paths." The true preparation for Christmas is too often lost sight of by the people. They decorate their homes with evergreens.

They stuff their larders with good things. Christmas for them too often means only a time of good cheer—turkey, and plum-pudding, and candy, and toys, and a Christmas tree. These signs of festivity are not forbidden; for Christmas is a joyous and social feast. For, indeed, "a Child is born to us, and a Son is given us." But if He is, we shall find Him rather in the austere joys proffered by the Church, above all, in the Christmas Mass, in the Banquet at the holy altar rails, in the angels' hymn, and in the other lovely church exercises which remind us so forcibly of the shepherds' joys, and of those of Mary, and Joseph, and the adoring angels, around the humble crib of Bethlehem.

"*And it came to pass that when they were there, her* (*Mary's*) *days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.*" (*Luke ii, 6.*)

1. This mystery of the Nativity of our blessed Lord seems to be the most human of all the mysteries proposed for our veneration during the course of the year. It is the one that touches most profoundly our feelings and sympathies as men. For, what more touching than the spectacle of a God coming amongst us in the form of a child and stretching forth His little hands for help to creatures such as we? What more amiable than the sight of a God-Saviour hiding His Divinity under the rags and swathing bands of babyhood? What more soul-inspiring than the thought of angelic choirs making musical the midnight air and shrouding the heavens in glory as they come to bid poor shepherd boys to worship at the cradle of the new-born "King of the Jews"?

But simple and touching as are the circumstances that surround the birth of the Saviour, the contem-

plation of this event raises us at once to the sublimest thoughts that can occupy the mind of man, and there is disclosed to us underlying this event a triple mystery: in the Eternal Generation of the Word in the mind of God the Father—in the temporal birth of the Man-God in the stable of Bethlehem—and in the spiritual birth of the same Saviour in our hearts by grace, which is the complement and the term of His temporal birth and sojourn amongst us.

2. St. Luke narrates in touching language the mystery of the temporal birth of the Son of God; but the mystery of His Eternal Generation, "who shall narrate," says the prophet, and what intellect of creature shall conceive?

Mary indeed, wholly occupied with her own lowliness and unworthiness, conceives and gives birth to Him in time. The Eternal Father, all occupied with His own infinite greatness, contemplating and fully comprehending His Godhead, conceives His consubstantial and co-eternal Son, a Son equal to Him in all things—"the brightness of His glory"—"the express image of His substance"—"God sprung from God—Light produced from essential Light—true God begotten of true God—begotten, not made." Oh, let us adore this ineffable mystery, hidden in the bosom of the Father from all ages, made known to us in the fulness of time through the ministry of the Son!

We must not, then, in contemplating the temporal birth of the Word, lose sight of the splendors of His Eternal Generation—splendors which He has

known how to preserve; for while assuming what He was not, He ceases not to be what He was—for, in becoming like to man, He ceases not to be equal to God—splendors which, through His Incarnation, He comes to reveal to the world.

Before the Incarnation, what was known of this mystery? What was known of the mystery of the Trinity—the greatest, the most inscrutable of mysteries, and the foundation of all others? Nothing. The ancient world was wholly ignorant of the fecundity of the Godhead and the quality of the Saviour whom all nations were expecting; as it likewise erred in its conception of the nature of the Redemption He was destined to effect for men. To Jesus Christ it belongs to conduct us to the source of the life He draws from the bosom of His Father, and to reveal to the world the mystery of the Trinity, hitherto unknown to men.

3. Neither must we, while occupied with the touching circumstances of His temporal birth, forget the benefits He comes to confer on us—benefits worthy of a Man-God—benefits which are the outcome of the love of the Eternal Father, and which are so beautifully referred to by the Apostle of love: "God so loved the world that He gave for its Redemption His only Son."

Is it not, in fact, through the temporal birth of Jesus Christ that we are given in Him a Brother, and one "like to us in all things, save sin"? What an honor to the human race, and what an advantage, this new relationship we enter on with the Godhead!

By it the oracle is reversed. When God of old saw the first man clothed in the skins of beasts, which He gave him to cover the shame to which his folly had reduced him, He cried out in derision of the father of the human race, "Behold, Adam is become as one of Us!" Now we can truly say, when we look upon Jesus Christ clothed in the lowliness of our flesh, "Behold the Second Adam is become as one of us." God and Man will henceforth form but one Person, since the Son of God has espoused human nature as His bride.

Through the temporal birth of the Son of God we are given a Saviour and a Physician who comes to heal our many wounds. "Man," says St. Augustine, "was sick, but he neither sought for, nor even desired a physician. What does Jesus Christ do? He offers Himself to us in our needs. And oh, remedy unknown! He became sick Himself in order to cure us. He took it upon Himself to bear the stroke of His Father's anger, which we deserved. "He who knew no sin Himself is made the Victim of atonement for our sins."

Through the temporal birth of Jesus Christ we are given, finally, a Model and a Master, who comes to teach us to reform our lives. Before the coming of Jesus Christ the way to Heaven was abandoned and almost unknown; the virtues that conduct to it were despised. Jesus Christ came to teach His people this unknown science of salvation, and His own example must be their instruction. The stable, the crib, His rags and tears, appeal to us and speak to us more eloquently than words.

4. But in order that He may conduct us to our eternal end, we must, first of all, allow Him to be born spiritually in our hearts by grace, which is the ulterior object of His temporal birth. The devil, through sin, had usurped possession of the human heart. Jesus Christ comes to chase him thence, and to establish therein His eternal reign. If we close the entrance to our hearts against Him, it were for our misfortune that He was born. Mary herself, His most holy Mother, is more happy in having carried Him in her heart by grace than in having borne Him in her chaste womb. And we, if we would hereafter enjoy His glory in Heaven, must, while here on earth, share a joy like hers.

The conditions, moreover, of His spiritual birth are clearly portrayed in the mystery of His Nativity. It is purity and humility alone that are able to attract Him to the earth. It is in silence and solitude, far away from the turmoil of the world, in the actual exercise of obedience, that He wishes to be born. It is in the midst of poverty and mortification that He sets His throne. Let us not hope that He will form Himself otherwise in our hearts. He comes to live with us only under the conditions that He loves; and pride, and impurity, and worldly turmoil, and ambition, repel Him. Thus it was in the circumstances of His temporal birth, and thus it must be to the end.

Whilst, therefore, the proud, the impure, the ambitious, and the worldly-minded, represented in the different classes who that day thronged the Temple, the streets, and the palaces of Jerusalem, are passed

over by the Son of God; the shepherds alone, with Mary and Joseph, are admitted to His crib. For they already carry in their hearts the Divine Infant, whom they come to adore.

As the fruit of this meditation let us with reverent hearts adore, amid the humble surroundings of the crib of Bethlehem, the splendors of the Eternal Generation of the Word. Let us acknowledge with grateful hearts the goodness of Jesus Christ become for us in His birth, our Brother, our Model, our Saviour. Let us practise the virtues that He loved—humility, self-denial, purity, obedience, silence, love; that so He may be born in our hearts by grace whose happy birth we commemorate amid the joys of the Christmas festival.

1. There is neither Epistle nor Gospel of the Sunday to be read at Mass to-day, the Sunday within the octave of Christmas. It has neither office nor liturgy, and is known in Church language as "*Dominica Vacans.*" One of the reasons that influenced the Church to leave this Sunday out of the reckoning is in order that we might reflect the more deeply on the great mysteries surrounding the birth of the Saviour.

And, indeed, the stupendous event of the coming amongst us of the Word Incarnate is enough to take up the thoughts of a lifetime, even as its wonders have filled the mind of God from all eternity.

But there are also lessons to be learned by us from the manner of that coming, and these may well claim a share of our thought and deep reflection. One of those I will direct your attention to to-day.

It was one of the purposes of the Incarnation that the Saviour should discharge the office of model and teacher of mankind. And it is remarkable that whilst He accomplished the other great purposes of His life in a short time, whilst He achieved our Redemption by His Passion and death on Calvary, and whilst He established His Church in the last days of His public ministry—His whole life was taken up in His capacity of model and master and in inculcating lessons of virtue.

2. Now, amid the many features that marked the birth of our Saviour, perhaps the most striking was the poverty of its surroundings. And this was so remarkable that even the angel who announced it to the shepherds as they were keeping night watch over their flocks, pointed it out as its distinguishing trait. "Fear not," he said to them, "for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy that shall be to all the people. For this day is born to you a Saviour who is Christ, the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you, you shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger" (Luke ii, 10–12).

Now, why this poverty of the Infant Saviour? That reason we shall find if we consider a special purpose of the Incarnation. It was to destroy the great concupiscences that reigned in the world. And, first of all, "the concupiscence of the eyes."

Dearly beloved, the "concupiscence of the eyes," the love of riches, is one of the great maladies of sinful man. It is, moreover, the source that ministers to the other two, namely, sensuality, or the "concupiscence of the flesh," and the "pride of life," the striving after worldly honors and domination. It needed to be combated by the example of the Saviour.

Let us to-day occupy ourselves with this great lesson.

God in the beginning had created man with the design of making him happy by the possession of Himself. Hence, the capacity we feel in ourselves for the possession of the Infinite God. Man through sin

had lost God, for whom he was made; but he did not lose the inclination to be happy. Torn from the great Good who ought to have made his happiness, he seeks elsewhere for something to fill up this great void. Hence, that multiplicity of desires that nothing can satisfy. Hence, that insatiable avidity for exterior goods which St. John calls "the concupiscence of the eyes"—greed, which is one of the three great branches of cupidity that reign in the world. Hence, that esteem of riches and that horror of poverty. Hence, in the rich that secret complacency in their riches, complacency which attaches them to them. Hence, in the poor that aversion for their state, that impatience, those murmurs which render them really miserable—cupidity, fatal source of all injustices and crimes, which made the world a great mart of chicanery where everyone sought to circumvent his neighbor and thrive upon the wrong done him.

3. It was to cure us of this malady that Christ, when He came into the world, was born in poverty. And what a poverty! A poverty the most extreme that can be imagined. A poverty of His own choice and liking. A poverty that He sanctifies and leaves to the Church as a holy heritage—the imitation of which shall achieve the sanctification of innumerable souls in every age to the end of time.

a) I say, the poverty of Christ at His birth was extreme. Could He in fact have carried the practice of poverty to greater lengths than He did in His birth at Bethlehem? I pray you, dear brethren, to

mark all the circumstances of that birth, and the selection of events and persons which help Him in the practice of this virtue. He chooses for His Mother a Virgin, illustrious, indeed, from her ancestry, but of a family decayed and fallen into poverty. He whom He chooses for His foster-father is a poor carpenter, who earns his bread by the labor of his hands. The city where He is born is indeed the city of David, His ancestor, but it is now little better than a hamlet; and He is born in it as a stranger. The place of His birth is a stable by the wayside. His cradle is a manger. Behold the damp straw on which He lies. Behold the poor rags that cover Him. Could He have carried the practice of poverty to greater lengths than He did? Could He not have said at His birth, what He said later on in life: "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not whereon to lay His head"?

Ah, dearly beloved, let us adore this poverty of Jesus, which He willingly underwent for love of us, and which has sweetened the lot of the truly poor in all ages.

b) But the poverty of Jesus was not only extreme; it was also a poverty of choice. In the circumstances of our birth, nothing is of our own choice; all depends on the providence of God. It depends not on him who comes into the world whether he be born in a palace or in a stable; upon a cushion of state or upon a pallet of straw; to be the child of a queen or of a slave. But it was not thus with our God. All in this

was His own choice. It was He who selected the time, the place, the surroundings, of His happy birth. It was He, Eternal Wisdom, who chose the state, and the manner, and the circumstances, in which He should appear in the world.

What do we learn from this, if not the Saviour's contempt for riches, and if not to despise them likewise? What do I say? Is this simple contempt? Is it not a manifest reprobation of riches, and the eloquent commendation of a life of poverty?

Ah, I am not surprised that the Son of God in afterlife launched his maledictions and his anathemas against the love of riches. The very first words of Christian morality taught us in the Gospel, are they not a commendation of a life of poverty? "Blessed are the poor in spirit." It was only an echo of what He taught far more substantially and efficaciously by His birth in the stable of Bethlehem.

c) But it is not a simple esteem of, or preference for, poverty. It is a sanctification, it is a benediction, it is a consecration of the state of poverty. It is a consecration of a state in which innumerable souls of every age and sex should sanctify themselves afterwards in the Christian world. For Jesus Christ sanctified everything He touched. He appears in the world a little Child, and He sanctifies infancy and changes it from being a state where the child was a mere chattel that might be enslaved or destroyed at the whim of the parent, into one where it commands the care and respect of all. He enters the Jordan and at His touch the element of water is given power so

as to be made the matter of the Sacrament of Baptism. He presides at a marriage banquet and blesses the nuptial union and lifts it from being a mere natural contract to be a Sacrament of the Church with power to confer sacramental and sanctifying graces. He passes along the crowded street, and at His presence a new society springs up, regenerated and sanctified, to carry the blessings of salvation to the ends of the earth. He retires into the desert, and at His presence the wilderness blooms as a garden, producing a race of men of whom the world is not worthy. He hangs upon a tree, and from that time the Cross which was an anathema and a curse, becomes the symbol of salvation to all men. He dies; and behold, that which was from the beginning the penalty of sin, is made the passage to a glorious resurrection and unending happiness. He therefore sanctifies poverty in becoming poor for love of us, rich and infinitely rich as He was in the bosom of His heavenly Father. Hence it is that we see in the Gospel that His blessings are for the poor; that His favors are for the poor; and that they are for the rich only in as far as they are poor in spirit and keep their hearts detached from their wealth.

Blessed then are the poor who are conformed to Jesus Christ by their state; but blessed only if they are at the same time poor by love and inclination: since it is this conformity that works their sanctification and their glory.

4. See then, dearly beloved, you who are poor in this world's goods, that you be truly poor by affec-

tion and practice. And if at any time you feel the inconveniences that poverty entails, take heed lest you give way to murmuring and complaints. Rather rejoice when you feel its pangs: for thus will your life be made the more conformable to that of Jesus Christ. And to this effect urge yourselves by frequent meditation on the surroundings of the birth of Christ in Bethlehem.

Learn also to sanctify your state by the practice of those virtues which made the poverty of the Babe of Bethlehem so acceptable to His Heavenly Father.

What are those virtues? When I say humility was one of the virtues that accompanied the poverty of Christ, I speak only of what was of necessity. For humiliation and contempt are the lot of the poor, and Christ joyfully underwent the humiliation and contempt inseparable from the state He embraced for love of us, and He bore all the insults that were heaped on Him in His poverty.

Again, He practised patience in a divine degree. See all the privations to which He was exposed at His birth, coming into the world as He did in a dreary hovel in the depth of winter, and feeling the pangs of cold; and, yet, no cry, no look of murmuring or complaint, but a sweet benignity of expression which told of the soul resigned and trusting absolutely in the providence of His Father.

And, lastly, love; aye, love of that Father in obedience to whose command He came to earth; and of man for whose salvation He emptied Himself of the riches and glory that were His.

So, also, you dearly beloved, sanctify your condition of poverty by the practice of the virtues which naturally accompany it and make it acceptable to God.

Be humble, and accept joyfully the humiliations which your state of life is necessarily subject to. Be patient, and take joyfully to the privations which your state of poverty necessarily entails: for, without this virtue a poor person is both a torture to himself and a source of constant irritation to others, and he loses the most delightful opportunities of merit.

And, lastly, love God and your neighbor; for this is the fulfillment of the whole law, the sovereign virtue which gives form and merit to all other virtues, and without the practice of which all other virtues are useless and unacceptable to God.

Thus your poverty will have point and object in it, and the slight tribulations it will cost you here will bear no comparison to the eternal glory that shall be their reward in heaven.

LESSONS OF BETHLEHEM. II

1. When commenting on the lessons conveyed to us by the Saviour at His birth, I told you that He came to correct one of the great concupiscences that reigned in the world, namely, the irregular love of riches. And this He did by Himself being willing to be born in the midst of poverty.

Let me to-day continue the same subject, and show you that in the same birth He contradicted another of the great vices to which men are addicted. Dearly beloved, if the love of riches is one of the great maladies of sinful man, this other of which I speak is neither less dangerous nor less shameful; nay, it is more dangerous still, because it seems more natural, and it serves to nourish and strengthen in us this irregular love of riches. This is the love of pleasures—a shameful malady which is the effect of sin and the source of a thousand crimes; one which, moreover, blinds us and decoys us into the most frightful sins. This irregular love of pleasures is the strongest passion in the human heart—the most fell source of sin in the world, and of the eternal destruction of men.

In fact, since that fatal pleasure tasted by our first parents in eating the forbidden fruit, everything is unruly in our hearts. Slaves of the flesh and

of the senses, we feel a violent inclination for earthly gratifications. The beauty of creatures is become a snare for us, and our passion, allowed to have its way, knows no other rule in their use than the satisfaction of its desires.

Such are we when left to ourselves and when we follow the inclinations of nature. Hence, that corruption of all flesh of which Scripture speaks. Hence, that deluge of disorders in the world. Hence, those shameful vices which the Apostle forbids to be even named among Christians, but which the corruption of the world renders so common. Hence, that love of sensible satisfactions and that hatred of suffering that we all have so much difficulty to overcome.

2. Now, this evil leaning in our hearts is one of the chief things that Christ came to remedy, and to this task He devoted Himself from His infancy by the practice of the most austere self-denial.

When the angel announced the birth of the Messias to the shepherds who were keeping the night watches over their flocks, the mark he gave by which He might be known was that "the Infant was wrapt in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger." What clothing for a delicate infant, in mid-winter, and what a cradle for the King of Heaven and earth!

But let us with the shepherds "go over to Bethlehem, and see this word that is come to pass." The Saviour might have been content to preach penance from His seat of glory. But behold a preaching far more efficacious. It is the sight of Jesus suffering, and suffering from His birth in order to detach us

from the pleasures that we love, and to make us love the suffering that we hate and fly from.

Approach and see; what is here to flatter the senses? A half-ruined stable by the wayside through which the winter-winds moan. Behold what the Saviour opposes to the luxurious houses and surroundings which serve our vanity and pleasure. A few baby clothes to cover a shivering Infant from the cold wintry air; these He contrasts to the comfortable and warm clothing in which we wrap our bodies. The heavy breathing of the animals; these He opposes to the lubricious concerts and licentious songs which carry so much the more subtly poison to the heart as they flatter the more agreeably the senses. A little straw on which the King of the universe lies; this He contrasts with the luxurious softness of our beds. He who nourishes the whole universe is Himself content with a little milk. This He opposes to the variety and delicacy of our food and the sumptuousness of our feasts. Sufferings and sorrows He contrasts to our sensuality and luxury. Let us justify, therefore, if we can, our indulgence of pleasure and our hatred of discomforts. Ah, it is not in the school of Jesus Christ that we have learned this love or this hatred. What resemblance is there between the Master and the disciple, between the Head and the members? "The animal man," says St. Paul, "cannot taste the things that are of God." Carnal wisdom is opposed to God. It is to confound it that Jesus Christ is born in this state of suffering.

3. But it was little for our Lord to teach us to

fear, and to fly from, and to avoid voluptuousness. The pagans themselves had learned how hurtful it is, and many among them could give lessons on this head to Christians of our day. Our Lord wished to raise our thoughts higher, and His crib is a school where we learn a lesson which nature inspires not, which human philosophy teaches not, which the wise of the world have not tasted; I mean to say the love of suffering. Yes, Lord, this is the lesson You teach us to-day by Your crib and Your tears. You commence already to say to us what You taught us later on: "Blessed are those who weep." "Blessed are those who suffer," because they are conformed to a God weeping and suffering. We already begin to hear from the lowly pulpit of Your crib that word so hard to self-love, but so sweet to faith and charity: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself."

Self-indulgence it was that first brought about our fall. It is through sufferings alone that we can be saved. It is by them that we can expiate our sins, cure our evil inclinations, purify our heart, offer to God the sacrifice of our mind and body, and merit the chaste delights that are tasted in Heaven.

But how could this salutary medicine become supportable to us, sensual and squeamish as we are, if our blessed Lord had not sweetened its bitterness by taking it first Himself. Hence, you see why it is that at His birth He united in order to suffer the more so many painful circumstances: the place—a rude shed altogether unfurnished; the time—mid-winter, mid-

night; the state—the most abject poverty; His consolations, His tears. He commences from His birth the sacrifice which He was to consummate on the Cross.

4. But these are the tears and the mortifications of a God who takes the bitterness of them on Himself only that He may soften ours; who submits to them only in order to make us look on them otherwise than we do, and in order to encourage us. It is here in fact that poverty, and sufferings, and tears change their nature. It is in this school that we are not only taught to suffer with patience, but to rejoice in our sufferings. Ah, I see coming out of this school the poor shepherds content with their lot and filled with joy. Such is the effect of the tears of Jesus Christ. I see coming out of it innumerable troops of martyrs, who cry out with the Apostle: "I am filled with joy in the midst of my tribulations." I see numbers of Christians of every state and condition of life who, despising the pleasures and amusements of the world, lead a life conformable to Jesus suffering and Jesus sorrowing, and thus attain eternal happiness.

But more particularly than all do I see, from the example of the Saviour despising the comforts of life and undergoing a life of suffering for our sake, a new state spring up in the Church, whose aim is to perpetuate the divine life of Jesus on earth, and to make manifest to all men the supernatural influence of grace on the members of His Church by the practice of heroic mortification. This is the religious state, a state which crystalizes the sublime example

of Jesus suffering, and manifests to all generations and to all peoples the divine character introduced into our lives by Christ through the vow of chastity made by all its members. How grand, how noble is holy religion rendered by the practice of this lovely virtue, and what a glorious spectacle in the sight of men and angels—the spectacle of members of every sex and condition rising so high above the prompting of nature as to live in the practice of heroic self-denial which the faithful observance of the vow of chastity requires.

5. No, dearly beloved, there is nothing excessive or exaggerated in the magnificent eulogies which the Fathers of the Church have pronounced on virginal chastity. Some, as St. Augustine, say that it is the "glory of the earth," "the heritage of angels," and "an imitation of the life of heaven," "an apprenticeship to eternal incorruption which we serve in mortal and corruptible flesh." Others, as St. Cyprian, that "it is the most brilliant flower that adorns the garden of the Church"; or, as St. Jerome, that "it is the sole grain that produces the hundredfold"; or, again, that "it is the virtue of Paradise," and that "the earth is unworthy of it." All, that it is the most precious of gifts and the triumph of grace over the inclinations of nature. But however magnificent those expressions are, we must avow that this heavenly virtue is above all praise.

6. Now before our Lord Himself gave the example of it, this practice of heroic self-denial, if you except the cases of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph,

was unknown in the world. The pagans had uselessly affected the phantom of it. Among the Jews sterility was a reproach, and fecundity of the womb passed for benediction. If there were among them holy men who lived in celibacy, such as Elias, and Elisaeus, and others of the prophets, it was not believed that the weaker sex could attain to a virtue so elevated. Jesus Christ, therefore, suffering in His childhood and suffering throughout life, is the Master who has ennobled and sanctified suffering and self-denial, and taught the children of a debauched and debased race a virtue which is peculiar to the angels and to Heaven.

7. Rejoice, therefore, you especially, dear Sisters, that this heavenly Teacher has called you to the observance of this angelic life. Prize it, and prize the virtue that characterizes it and marks it with the seal of nobility in the sight of Heaven and earth. And that you may be able to observe it inviolate through your life, take those precautions that are necessary for its effectual observance. What are these precautions?

When I say that you are to pray continually for grace to practise chastity, I say only what Scripture itself teaches and what the Wise Man tells us is indispensable for its observance. "I knew," says Solomon, "that I could not otherwise be chaste except God gave it; and this also was a point of wisdom to know whose gift it is; I went, therefore, to the Lord and besought Him for it, and prayed with my whole heart."

Secondly, you must watch over your senses and close them against the attractions of creatures. You must, moreover, retrench all pleasures, not only those that are dangerous, but even those that are useless; all dissipation that can soften the heart and weaken or divide the mind, and you must avoid all worldly and profane amusements that can awaken in you the love and the spirit of the world. It is to this end that holy religion hedges you round with so many rules and observances, designed to prevent the encroachments of the world into religious houses.

And, lastly, you must mortify yourselves and lead truly penitential lives in order to preserve this precious virtue. Chastity is a rare lily that grows only among thorns. It is a wisdom that is not found with those who lead a delicate life. To preserve it, therefore, you are to lead truly penitential lives, and be, as it were, dead to the world.

That you may animate yourselves to its practice, meditate often on Jesus suffering and Jesus sorrowing in His birth, the truest model of religious mortification and of perfect chastity that the world ever saw.

THE NAME OF JESUS

"After eight days were accomplished that the Child should be circumcised, His name was called Jesus, which was called by the angel before He was conceived in the womb." (*Luke ii, 21.*)

1. The feast of the Circumcision is one that is celebrated throughout the Church with great joy and solemnity. And this not only because of the new year that has begun, but, still more, because of the auspicious event that it commemorates.

Dearly beloved, the christening of a child, or, to put it in a more general form, the conferring of a name by which the future man or woman is to be known through life, has been looked upon as a joyful event at all times and among all peoples. And this, because, amongst other reasons, the little mite that is carried in the arms of its nurse adds another member to the beadroll of the family; and its career in life is looked forward to as about to increase that family's credit and influence before men. And if the occasion of the conferring of a name be one of joy with respect to the infant that only a little while ago was a "child of wrath," and whose future may be cursed and blighted by crime; what joy and gratitude should not the present excite in us, when the

event which we commemorate is none other than the giving of a temporal name to our God—to the long promised Messias, at whose coming "all the nations of the earth should be blessed"?

And what a name! Not such as is given to a poor child of man; but a name of destiny, and one which was first given Him from Heaven—the name of "Jesus," so sweet to the lips and to the heart, the only source of hope to the sin-laden peoples. The present is a fitting occasion, then, to study the mysteries of the Sacred Name.

2. The Son of God is not the only one who has been called by this beautiful name. Scripture furnishes us with several examples of men who had been so called, even, we are led to believe, by the design of God Himself. Thus, Joseph, the saviour of Egypt; Josue, who led the Israelites into the promised land; the high priest, the son of Josedeck, who led the people of God back from the captivity of Babylon; the author of the inspired book of Ecclesiasticus—all these have been honored with it.

But this Divine Name is none the less proper to the Son of God Incarnate. For He alone has merited it. He alone has fulfilled the office which it signifies in all the extent of its signification. To Him alone, therefore, it by right belongs. And if by a particular direction of God it has been given to others, it cannot belong to them, and they could bear it only as figures of Jesus Christ Himself.

3. In fact, the glorious title of Saviour, which this name signifies, could belong only to a Man-God;

since no other than a Man-God could save us from the desperate state in which we were. For you must remember that, by reason of our first parents' sin, the whole human race was deprived of original justice, which was our sole claim to divine favor, and we were condemned to perpetual banishment from the face of God. Through original sin we all came into the world "children of wrath"; and to this first estrangement from God, we ourselves added many personal sins which merited for us the chastisement of hell.

Such being our condition, the justice of God demanded that, before pardoning us, full atonement be made to His offended Majesty.[1]

But who was capable of making that atonement, and, as a result, of saving us from the consequences of our sin? We ourselves could not do it. We were guilty in His sight; and, as our offense was infinite, we deserved infinite punishment. We could not save ourselves, therefore; and whatever services we might offer to God, were due to Him already on a thousand other titles. Not the angels—for they are finite in their being, and, therefore, finite in their merits, and incapable of making infinite atonement. Not even God Himself, as God, could make atonement to His justice, and save man from the consequences of his fall. Essentially sovereign and independent, incapable of abasing Himself in His own nature as God, He could not satisfy the claims of His offended jus-

[1] This was God's chosen method of bringing about our reparation, but He could of course have chosen other methods had He so willed.

tice. Man owed to God, therefore, a debt which only one capable of suffering an infinite punishment could pay.

But when our case appears on all sides desperate, the wisdom of God will devise, and the power of God will effect, a means by which infinite atonement will be made to divine justice on the part of man, and man will be saved from the consequences of his sin.

The wisdom and power of God will, I say, bring into existence a Man-God, who will bear the brunt of avenging justice, and who will, through the efficacy of His humiliations and sufferings, satisfy that justice and save the human race. The Man-God will, as the Apostle argues, suffer chastisement in the place of all men; and through the infinite efficacy of His atonement the human race will be saved.

This fact shows us what kind of a Saviour we have need of, and what is this Jesus who is given us. We should learn, then, from the greatness of the remedy, the depth of our wounds; and from the magnificence of the gift, the liberality of the Giver. It was a Man-God who was necessary to be our Saviour, and whom God has given us to save us. Every other means for salvation without a God-Saviour was useless. Nature; human wisdom; the Law of Moses; the efforts of our own will; example; instruction; even the word of God—all were powerless. Hence, we see the truth of St. Peter's words: "There is no salvation through any other than Him, and there is no other name under heaven which has been given to men by which they can be saved."

4. We sometimes meet with men who assume to themselves the most august and high-sounding names, names which they do not merit, and which they can put forth no just claims to. But when the Son of God assumes the great name of "Saviour," He does so only after having merited it on the most legitimate of titles. He wished that it be as the trophy of His victory over death and hell, and as the fruit of His conquest. It is at the price of His humiliations and sufferings and death that He wished to purchase it. And this, in order that that which has served to increase His rights might serve also to strengthen our confidence in Him. This we see in the purpose which actuated Him in all His great works as Man. Why, in fact, was He humiliated, "He who, having the form and nature of God, did not think it a usurpation to be made equal to God: why was He humiliated so far as to take the form and nature of a servant?" It was "to save us," says St. Paul. Why did He wish to become like man "in all things save sin," which He came to destroy, and which He could not commit? It was to save us. Why did He abase Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross? It was to save us. It was to form us by His example that He lived. It was to instruct us that He spoke. It was to sanctify us that He suffered. It was to redeem us that He died. And it was to crown His sufferings and humiliations, says the Apostle, that "God gave Him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven, on earth, and in hell; and that every tongue

should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father."

5. Such then is the title upon which is founded the claim to the great name of Jesus which belongs to the Son of God made Man for the love of man, and which belongs to Him alone. Divine name! which cannot be pronounced with a respect worthy of God except by the motion of the Spirit of God. Sacred name! which makes hell tremble, and which chases the devils. Name, full of power, and by the strength of which are wrought the greatest miracles! Salutary name! from which the Sacraments of the New Law draw all their efficacy. Efficacious name! whose infinite merit obliges the Heavenly Father to hear the prayers of men. Name, infinitely glorious for Jesus Christ! infinitely consoling to Christians! Name, which made the Saints find joy even in tribulations and glory in reproaches! Name, full of mercy, of goodness, of charity! Name, "truly admirable throughout the whole earth!" Name, sweeter than the most exquisite perfume! Name, which alone is our hope and our joy! or, as it is so beautifully expressed in the hymn of St. Bernard often sung in our churches:

"Jesus, that name inspires my mind
With springs of life and light;
More than I ask, in Thee I find,
And languish with delight!

"No sound, no harmony so gay,
Can art of music frame;

No thoughts can reach, no words can say
The sweets of Thy blest name."

6. Oh, let us adore, then, the sacred name of Jesus, the name proper to the Son of God made Man for our salvation. Let us place in it all our trust and confidence.

And, when temptation hovers around us, and the atmosphere seems thick with sin, and the heavens are clouded from our sight, and the gusts of passion swell against the frail barque of our soul; let us call unceasingly on the saving name of Jesus; and the potent voice of the Saviour will be heard amid the rattle of the storm commanding the elements of sinful passion within us, and a sweet calm will settle on our soul to tell of the ready presence of our God to save.

And since we daily share in the benefits of the Redemption He has purchased for us, let us daily return Him thanks; but especially on this feast, which commemorates the conferring of His name and the formal entrance on His office of Saviour by receiving on His Body the mark of sin—that sin that He will contend with during life, till, finally, on Calvary, He will drown it in His Blood, and achieve the Redemption of the world.

THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI

"When Jesus, therefore, was born in Bethlehem of Juda in the days of King Herod, behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying: Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East, and are come to adore Him." (*Matt. ii, 1–12.*)

1. If there is any festival throughout the year that should beyond others bring us a particular joy; if there is any event recorded in Scripture the remembrance of which should fill our souls with gratitude to God; if there is any grace that we should treasure diligently and earnestly seek to profit by; that festival, that event, that grace, is the one we commemorate to-day, the account of which I have just read for you—namely the call of the Gentiles, our forebears, to the true faith and to a participation in the graces of the Saviour.

It is true, indeed, that other great solemnities of the year—Easter, for instance, Pentecost, Christmas, have a glory peculiarly their own, and one that calls forth our homage and gratitude. But, if we consider rightly, the events commemorated in those solemnities concerned primarily the Jews. When the Saviour rose from the dead on Easter morning, to whom did He reveal Himself? Was it not to the dis-

ciples, to Mary Magdalen, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the surrounding country, the descendants of the patriarch Jacob? When the Holy Spirit descended on Pentecost Sunday, was it not on the same disciples that His "parted tongues of fire sat"? Was it not their minds that He enlightened? Was it not their hearts that He inflamed with the holy ardor of love? If, impelled by the same Holy Spirit, the disciples descended to the city and preached to the multitude; was it not Jews they met, and spoke to, and converted? If they spoke in all the known languages, does not this prove only the more clearly the great and distinctive gathering of Jews from all quarters of the world to the manifestation of the Holy Spirit? Even Christmas, the festival which, of all, brings joy to the Christian people, because, indeed, "a Child is born to us and a Son is given us"; does not it even belong peculiarly to the Jews? And when Christ the Saviour was born in Bethlehem, was it not to the shepherds—Jews—that the angels announced the joyful tidings?

But to-day we commemorate the manifestation of the Redeemer to the Gentiles, that is to say, to our ancestors and to ourselves, and their call to the true faith after they had for ages lain in the darkness of superstition and unbelief.

2. This feast is called Epiphany, that is to say, "the Manifestation"; for on this day we commemorate a triple manifestation of Jesus Christ to men. First of all, we commemorate that great event recorded by St. Luke in the opening sentences of his

gospel, wherein Jesus Christ is declared to be the Son of the Most High God and Teacher of mankind. For, as the Saviour came forth from His baptism in the Jordan, the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him; whilst, at the same time, the voice of the Heavenly Father was heard saying: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him."

The second manifestation of Jesus Christ commemorated in this day's festival is the working of His first miracle at the marriage feast of Cana in Galilee. In this He showed Himself for the first time gifted with divine power. And by the changing of the water into wine He prefigured that still more wonderful miracle accomplished by Him at the Last Supper, of the changing of the substances of bread and wine into those of His most precious Body and Blood.

But the great overshadowing event commemorated in this day's festival, as handed down from the earliest days of the Church, is the call of the Gentiles to the true religion, typified in the coming of the Wise Men from the East to worship the newborn Saviour at Bethlehem.

3. That you may take in the full import of this momentous event, let me remind you that it was now several thousand years since the Gentile peoples had laid aside, almost universally, the worship of the true God and begun to adore gods of their own fashioning and fancy. Having fallen away from faith and hope in the one true God, the senseless people were

carried about by every blast of error, till at last they worshipped everything that came before them. They adored trees, and stones, and animals, and insects, and serpents; or, rather, to use the words of Scripture, "they worshipped devils" under the impersonation of their own passions and vices, and looked on them as the gods in whom they placed their trust.

During those long centuries God beheld with a bleeding heart the depravity of those peoples who took in the whole human race, save and except the Jews alone; and He longed for the time when He might announce to them the glad tidings of salvation through the ministry of His Son made Man. With this object in view, He kept a ray of the primeval revelation still flickering amongst them. Moreover, He from time to time raised up in their midst men gifted with the spirit of prophecy, who announced the Messias to come, together with the blessings that His coming should inaugurate throughout the world. And, lastly, He permitted that for some centuries before the birth of Our Lord the Jews should be dispersed among the Gentiles that they might spread amongst them the promises concerning the Messias and prepare them for the future call to the faith.

Be that as it may, it is certain, from the writings and traditions of all peoples, that at the time of the birth of the Saviour all the nations of the earth were in expectation of the coming of a great personage who, sprung from the Jews, should rule over the whole earth, and whose coming, heralded by the appearance of a mysterious star, should be a source of blessings

to mankind. And, hence, we see the Wise Men, conducted by this same star, come to Jerusalem and inquire on all sides: "Where is He that is born King of the Jews; for we have seen His star in the East, and have come to adore Him?"

4. The appearance of the Wise Men and their anxious inquiries of the new-born Saviour raised great commotion in Jerusalem. For, although the Jews were the depositaries of the promises made by God concerning the coming of His Son, and though they were acquainted with all the signs by which He might be known, they were as yet unaware of His presence amongst them.

The report of the arrival of the Wise Men and of their purpose reached the ears of King Herod, who sent for them and inquired, as the Gospel tells us, "about the appearance of the star and the cause of their coming." He, being of an alien race and only imperfectly acquainted with the Scriptures, called together the Sanhedrin, or great council of the Jews, composed of the priests and ancients and doctors of the law, that he might know from them exactly where the Saviour was to be born. And they replied: "In Bethlehem of Juda, as foretold by the prophet: And thou, Bethlehem, the land of Juda, art not the least among the principalities of Juda; for, from thee shall spring the Chief who shall feed the flock of Israel, My people."

To Bethlehem, therefore, the Wise Men direct their steps; and as soon as they leave the precincts of Jerusalem, the faithful star once more appears and goes be-

fore them, till at last it rests "over where the Child was" . . . "and entering into the house they found the Child with His Mother, Mary." (I beg of you to pay attention to one little word in the Gospel narrative. The evangelist says: not that "the star stood over the cave of Bethlehem," but "over where the Child Jesus was," "and entering into *the house*," not the stable. This gives us a clue to the movements of the Holy Family in the early days of the Nativity; and it is likely that that sympathy of feeling which is never wanting amongst the poor, impelled some of the shepherds to invite those outcasts to partake of the hospitality of their humble home.) To this house, then, the star conducts the Wise Men; and into this they enter, present their gifts, and adore Jesus.

5. O dearly beloved, you who are also of the Gentile stock, turn your thoughts a little while towards that poor cottage at Bethlehem. Enter in spirit with those holy men and adore. For Bethlehem, the birthplace of the Saviour, is also the natal place of our faith and hope, and the place whence originate all the spiritual benefits that we enjoy; enter and see that little Child, an outcast from His birth, and dependent for shelter on the charity of the poor. That Child is the "desired of nations"; the long expected Messias; He who is come "to crush the serpent's head"; "the Lamb of God who cometh to take away the sins of the world." This the Wise Men, at least, recognize Him to be. For, behold, in the words of the Gospel, "falling down they adore Him."

O glorious gift of faith, which impels these Wise

Men to reject the testimony of the senses and the shallow arguments of reason and to acknowledge Christ as the Son of the Living God! Sublime gift of faith, which enables them to peer through the veil of sensible things behind which God works His greatest designs for the advancement of His own glory and for our good!

6. And we, my brethren, what do we not owe to faith? By faith, as by a divine sun, the thick clouds of ignorance in which we were enveloped are dissipated, and we come to the clear knowledge of divine truth. By faith as by a mighty telescope we are enabled to peer into the regions of mystery and discover brilliant truths in the midst of the darkness in which God veils His majesty. By faith we take flight as the eagle, and soar into the ethereal realms, mingle with the choirs of blessed spirits who, on poised wing, chant the divine praises before the throne of God.

What has faith not done for the human race? It has lifted men from the groveling state of nature. It has made them free citizens of Heaven. It has transformed and humanized the world. See the condition of the Gentile nations before they were enlightened by the Gospel. Were they not so many theaters of vice and crime, where everyone fell down before his passions and worshipped them as gods? See the sad condition of the pagan world to-day in these great countries of the Orient which have sent so many of their children amongst us. And what would be our condition if we had lived in times and countries where the faith of Jesus Christ was unknown?

Let this thought, then, urge us to give unceasing thanks to God, "who has transformed us from darkness into His admirable light." Let us prize our faith, the most precious of God's gifts, and the foundation of all others. Aye, let us prize it, for it can be lost, and it has been lost by peoples once the most illustrious in the Christian world; nay, do we not see it perishing daily in the hearts of thousands in our own city? Let us cherish it, then; and to this effect, let us take care that ours be not a dead faith, a faith that molders in the slough of indifference. Let it be, rather, a living and active faith, a faith that will not have us come empty-handed before our God; but one that, like that of the Wise Men, will inspire us to bring gifts to our newborn King: the gold of charity, the incense of sincere praise, as to the sovereign God; the myrrh of a penitential and mortified life, which will make us conform to the suffering and crucified life of Jesus Christ. Thus, presenting before the throne of God the fruits of a living and sincere faith, may we hope to be admitted one day to the vision of the Divine Essence, the supreme reward of all our labors and strivings and watchings here below.

THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE

"*And after the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they carried Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord.*" (*Luke ii, 22–39.*)

I

Jesus Our Model in Generosity and Sacrifice

1. When Zerobabel, the prince of Juda, and Jesus, the son of the high priest, Jozedeck, were raising the walls of the second temple, the old men who returned after their seventy years' captivity in Babylon were filled with grief at the sight of its mean architecture and of the lost prerogatives of the temple of Solomon; and "it seemed as nothing in their eyes in comparison to the glory of the former temple." And God sent his prophets, Aggaeus and Malachy, to encourage them with the assurance that the glory of the latter should far exceed that of the former; since the Lord of the temple Himself would honor it with His presence.

And in this Gospel we see the fulfillment of these prophecies. But, oh! how different the fulfillment to that expected by the Jews. They looked forward to the coming of a great temporal ruler, who should appear in all the glory of Solomon; and behold, instead, an

Infant in the arms of a young mother, beside whom walks a young man carrying two pigeons, the offering of the poor.

2. Truly "God's ways are not our ways, nor are His thoughts ours!" Here indeed is a mystery that needs unfolding. What is the meaning, then, of the Presentation? Well, the whole spirit of this mystery, dearly beloved, is of consecration and sacrifice. It has been remarked of the Visitation that the mystery itself and the graces that accompany it were the immediate sequence of the Incarnation and the firstfruits of sanctification effected through the means of the corporal presence of the Saviour in the world. And I can make a somewhat analogous statement with respect to the Presentation, and say that it is the outcome of the Nativity, and the formal dedication of Himself by Jesus Christ, whilst still a child, to the great work for which He was born; namely, to the sacrifice of His life upon the Cross for our Redemption.

O brethren, consider the importance and the far-reaching effect of that great act of the Infant Saviour. The oblation of the Divine Infant by the hands of the high priest included in it the submission of His will to all the sufferings, all the persecutions, all the privations and torments that He was afterwards to undergo, even to the shedding of His Blood and the laying down of His life in the cause of the whole human race. What love and gratitude ought not the consideration of this great act of dedication excite in our hearts—in us who are the recipients of the graces of the Redemption!

3. But we rest not in the sentiments of love and gratitude alone. Jesus Christ in the Presentation is our model in the sacrifice we ought to make of ourselves to God by the consecration to Him of a life wholly devoted to His service. The Presentation of the Child Jesus, I say, represents the oblation of all Christians to the service and love of God.

In the old law God commanded that the first-born of every family should be offered to Him as a hostage of the fealty of the junior members. Jesus Christ, the First-born of the Eternal Father, having adopted us into the family of the Godhead, comes to offer Himself as a hostage for our sakes. It was thus for us, and, as it were, in our name that the Divine Infant came to offer to His Father the homage of our submission. The Presentation of the Divine Infant, therefore, compels the oblation of our lives to God; and woe to us, ungrateful disciples, if we are afterwards found wanting in the carrying out of that dedication; if we allow our good Master to go alone on the road to Calvary without daring to follow in His footsteps.

The Presentation in the temple sanctifies the oblation of our works also; and it is only in consequence of and in union with that great act of oblation that we, our good works, our hearts, our lives, though a thousand times immolated, can be agreeable to the Almighty. When thus we make the offering of our lives to God in union with, and, as the Church's prayers put it in our mouth, "through our Lord Jesus Christ," we enter on a participation in the infinite acceptability which every act of the Saviour has with the Eternal

Father. Let us unite, therefore, to the oblation of the Divine Infant the sacrifice of our lives to God; and when we pray, oh, let us offer our prayers to God in union with, and through our Lord Jesus Christ, His only Son, who liveth and reigneth world without end. Amen.

II

Mary Our Model in Heroic Self-Immolation

1. But Jesus is not the only model that is given us in this mystery of the dedication we should make of ourselves to God. In Mary, His blessed Mother, there is given us an example of generosity and sacrifice the like of which the world had never seen before. When the old man, Simeon, took the Divine Child in his arms he blessed His parents, and said to Mary, His Mother: "Behold, this Child is set up for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be contradicted; and thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed."

Consider, dearly beloved, the full import of that prophecy of the aged Simeon. "Behold," he says, "this Child is set up for the fall." Yes, not only "for the salvation," but also for "the damnation of many in Israel." He shall be as a butt to be pelted at by the wicked; that the sentiments of many, whether they be of love and loyalty, or, on the contrary, of hatred and hostility to the Saviour, may be manifested. "And thy own soul a sword shall pierce." By the of-

fering of her Child in the temple, therefore, Mary devoted that Child, her only one, to death for the Redemption of mankind.

To understand the greatness of this sacrifice we must take into account two things—the love of our Blessed Lady for her Jesus; and the consequence such an offering involved both for her and for her Divine Son. As to Mary's love for Jesus, it was inconceivable. In Him there was wrapped up the double love of a Mother for her only Child, and of the holiest of creatures for her God. And this Child, for our sake, "she sets up for a sign to be contradicted." He will be made the butt for all the malice of hell and for the persecutions of the wicked. This Child, I say, she devotes to a life of suffering, and persecution, and scorn—to scourgings, and thorns, and opprobrium, and derelict-tion, and to a shameful death on the cross.

2. Moreover, Mary by that offering sacrificed her own heart. She, who was herself the Queen of Prophets, saw that from that moment "the sword of sorrow" would enter her soul and remain there during the rest of her days. She saw clearly the agony she would have to sustain at the Crucifixion; and from that moment to the day of Calvary it might be said of her what was afterwards narrated in the history of the Passion: "beneath the Cross stood Mary, His Mother." Who, then, shall describe the anguish of this generous soul when the solemn moment approached in which she entered the temple with her Divine Babe in her arms, as if to sign His death warrant with her own hands? Oh, let us with gratitude recall this generosity of

Mary, and, paraphrasing the words of Scripture, cry out with St. Bonaventure: "Mary so loved the world as to give for its Redemption her only Son."

3. But gratitude and admiration are not the only feelings this unparalleled sacrifice of Mary should call up in our hearts. The chief fruits the meditation on this holy mystery should produce in us are a tender love for, and an unshakable confidence in the Mother of God. What love for us has not the holy Virgin shown in the Presentation? And if she shrank not from the consequences of her act, though they were clearly revealed to her at that moment; can we fear that she will stop at any sacrifice in our behalf when she sees us put our trust in her in the midst of the dangers that beset us?

4. There are other fruits still that the consideration of Mary's sacrifice should produce in us, and they are that we learn from her generously to sacrifice ourselves, and to abstain from those many hurtful things that prevent the perfect union of our souls with God. If Mary parts with her only Son—dissolves a union the most holy that ever was, when it is decreed by the Eternal Father, and for love of us; what ought to become of the many attachments and criminal friendships that keep us at a distance from our God? And if she, the holiest of creatures, the most favored of women, is made through life the most afflicted of mothers; what ought to be the life of those who are guilty before God, and who from their birth are condemned to tears?

Oh, let us, then, in imitation of Mary's generous ex-

ample, separate ourselves from all those things that God wills us to give up for His sake. Let us, above all, keep away from sin and its occasions. Thus shall we make our lives acceptable to God, and merit hereafter the possession of Eternal Life.

THE FINDING OF THE CHILD JESUS AMONG THE DOCTORS

"When Jesus was twelve years old, they going up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast, and having fulfilled the days; when they returned, the Child Jesus remained in Jerusalem, and His parents knew it not. And thinking that He was in the company they came a day's journey, and sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And not finding Him they returned into Jerusalem seeking Him." (*Luke ii, 42–52.*)

I

Fidelity in the Performance of Our Religious Duties

1. The text of this Gospel has reference to that incident in our blessed Lord's life which forms the subject of one of the mysteries of the Rosary—the fifth joyful mystery. As all of you are votaries of the Rosary devotion, and as many of you are, moreover, members of the Confraternity of the Rosary, I feel I will not be out of harmony with your sentiments, or with the spirit of the day, if I devote this discourse to the consideration of this mystery.

2. And with regard to those mysteries I would ask you to observe that the founder of the Rosary selected not the incidents in Our Lord's life that were

the most striking in themselves, but those that he considered would be most useful to reflect upon.

Thus, he did not select the flight into Egypt, or the miracle of Cana in Galilee, or the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, or His Transfiguration, or the many other miraculous events related of Him; but only the few incidents in His private life that show us the scope of the Incarnation, or that were best adapted to convey to us lessons of virtue. And the reason is at once obvious. For the end of meditation is not so much the enlightenment of the mind as the training of the heart. The understanding of great religious truths makes us, indeed, theologians; but only the application of the virtues suggested by these truths to the government of our lives sanctifies us.

3. Now, in the consideration of this mystery of the Finding in the Temple, out of many thoughts suggested by the sacred text, I will take up three; and we shall see that, just as the lesson conveyed to us in the mystery of the Presentation in the Temple is one of consecration and sacrifice; so the lesson conveyed to us in this mystery is one of fidelity—fidelity in the performance of the duties of religion, in the custom of Mary and Joseph of going up year after year on the solemn festivals to worship in the temple of Jerusalem, —fidelity in time of trial, by their conduct during the three days' loss—fidelity in the great mission of life, in the conduct of Our Lord, who remains in the temple, as He said, that He might be "about His Father's business."

4. The first lesson that the meditation on this mys-

tery teaches us is, I have said, one of fidelity in fulfilling the duties of religion.

How beautiful is the example of piety given us by Mary and Joseph. Notwithstanding their poverty, and the fact of their living at a distance of over sixty miles from Jerusalem, was it their custom to go up on the great solemnities of the year to worship in the temple. Nor did the circumstances of their being obliged to carry with them a tender Child, nor, yet, the inconvenience of remaining many days from home, restrain them. They read in the law the will of God, which ordained that all the people should present themselves in the temple during these festivals, and this alone regulated their conduct. And with what holy dispositions did they not conform to the law; with what purity of intention; with what holiness in thought and affection; with what reverence in their exterior conduct? Ah, dearly beloved, Mary and Joseph are true models to us in the practice of our religious duties, and in imitating them we attain to true sanctity.

5. But, oh, profanity of the times in which we live! how many Christians in our days make no scruple of neglecting the most sacred duties which religion imposes, and take advantage of every pretext to rid themselves of the obligation of fulfilling the most common and easy practices of the Christian life?

How many are there among us who frequently neglect the Sunday Mass? How many who neglect the Easter duty, even when obliged to it under pain of mortal sin and threat of excommunication? How

many who never think of entering a church to attend evening devotions, or to pay a visit to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament; and to whom the great solemnities of the year would become unknown, were it not for the fact that these solemnities offer an occasion for worldly pleasure, if not, indeed, for the unlawful indulgence of the passions?

And amongst those who do attend to the holy practices of religion, what imperfection of conduct and intention; how many distracting thoughts; what want of purity of motive; what levity and absence of solid piety! Ah, brethren, here in our churches is offered a Sacrifice greater than those that were offered in the temple of Jerusalem! Here is daily offered the true Paschal Lamb. Here dwells in reality, though under sacramental forms, the same God who was present in figure only, in the temple. Here are conferred Sacraments of greater efficacy and holiness than those that sanctified the Jews. With reason, then, will God expect of us a greater fidelity, a more exact fulfillment, a more perfect motive, in the discharge of the sacred duties prescribed by holy Church for the worship of God and for our own sanctification.

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Fidelity in Time of Trial

1. But let us go on to the consideration of the second lesson suggested to us in this mystery, namely, the fidelity of Mary and Joseph in the bitter trial of the loss of Jesus.

What could have been the motive of our Lord's staying behind in Jerusalem without the knowledge of His parents, and thus causing them such sorrow? That motive was to give us a lesson of fidelity and submission to the will of God in the trials that beset us. Mary and Joseph had been guilty of no fault against prudence or watchfulness in permitting Jesus to stray from their company. Separated from each other in that great throng which numbered on occasions such as this over two millions of souls, each thought that the Divine Child was in the other's company. At the end of the first day's journey they were made aware that He was nowhere to be found.

Filled with grief, they seek Him among their relatives and acquaintances. They seek Him on the way, and in the city. Mary, especially, is filled with anxiety for His safety. For, mindful of the prophecy of the aged Simeon, she fears that His enemies might have waylaid Him. Have they hurried Him away? Have they begun the open persecution which she knows to be in store for Him? The only joy of her immaculate heart she can cry out with the Magdalen at the sepulchre: "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him."

Yet, through all this trial, the greatest of Mary's experience till that of the Passion, not a word of murmuring or complaint against the divine will, and no exhibition of human weakness only too frequently to be met with in the like circumstances.

2. All this is a lesson for us of fortitude in adversity, and submission to the will of God in the trials to which

He subjects us. How often do we not find by personal experience that our Lord hides Himself from us and leaves us in aridity and darkness? This is to train our souls in the spiritual warfare, and to teach us not to trust too much in sensible consolations.

These God usually gives to beginners in His service, and they are the milk imparted to children, as it were, before they are strong enough to digest the hard bread of adversity and spiritual privation, in which true virtue is proved and abundant merit gained.

3. Dearly beloved, we must, during the periods of trial and privation with which God proves us all, with Mary and Joseph look out in hope and patience for His return. If we would find Him, we must seek Him, not among our acquaintances; not among our relatives; not in the streets of the crowded city; but where He is always to be met with, in the house of prayer; in the temple of His Father; in the midst of the teachings and teachers of religion where the Eternal Wisdom will animate us with new strength and enlighten our minds with heavenly doctrine.

In this occupation is He found, on the third day by Mary and Joseph. "He is found in the temple, in the midst of the doctors disputing with them and asking them questions," an occupation which He calls "His Father's business."

III

In the Great Business of Our Eternal Salvation

1. We all, dearly beloved, have been entrusted with

a great business by our Eternal Father; and that business is the salvation of our souls. How important attention to that business is, one consideration alone will convince us—namely, that on each act of our lives depend eternal consequences. "Before man," at each step, "is life or death"—life in his fidelity to, death in his neglect in, the discharge of this business. And oh, how many fail in the conduct of this business and bring eternal penalties upon themselves! Like vessels that have strained their anchors and are tossed to and fro on the wide ocean till, finally, they are stranded, these souls, having lost touch with the true purpose of life, are borne helplessly along in the pursuit of earthly gratifications, till, finally, they are cast on the quicksands of life, derelict of grace, having suffered shipwreck of their salvation.

What is the lesson we are to learn from our Lord's conduct on this occasion, and from His reply to the anxious inquiries of His Mother?

2. It is a lesson of unflagging fidelity in the prosecution of the great business of our salvation. See His conduct on that, as on other occasions. He was sent into the world on a threefold mission—to redeem the human race—to restore and develop revealed truth almost lost among mankind—and to show us the way to regain our lost virtue by His divine example.

And how faithfully does He not go to His work and carry it through in spite of every opposition! He is confronted by prejudice. He is confronted by ignorance. He is confronted by the cupidity and hatred of men. He has to meet domestic foe and open enemy;

yet does He discharge faithfully His commission.

As to the present, the time of His public mission has not yet come. But He must prepare men's minds beforehand. He must raise hopes among the Jews concerning the near approach of the Messias, and therefore is He found in the temple in the midst of the doctors, interpreting the prophecies concerning the Messias at that special time when the great council of the Sanhedrin is sitting; when the priests are assembled from all parts of Judea; and when some couple of millions of the laity from all the regions of the known world are gathered together within the precincts of the holy city.

This is the reason why He enters on the discharge of this great work at this particular time. Though as yet a child in years He shows Himself possessed of wisdom more than human, and thus He prepares the foundations of the future church by lessons given in His boyhood.

Let us thank Eternal Wisdom for this lesson of zeal conveyed to us in this answer to His Blessed Mother, and let us take to heart the example given us in this mystery—of fidelity to the sacred duties of religion—fidelity in the midst of trials and dereliction. —fidelity to the great business of salvation entrusted to us by our Eternal Father who gives us as our models and teachers the Holy personages, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST

I

1. Once, when our Lord was disputing with the Pharisees, He put them this pertinent question: "What think you of Christ, whose Son is He?" They say to Him, "David's." He saith to them: "How then doth David in spirit call Him Lord, saying: 'The Lord said to my Lord: sit Thou on my right hand until I make Thy enemies Thy footstool.' If David then call Him, 'Lord,' how is He His Son?" And the Gospel says, "No man after that was able to answer Him a word."

Now, to those outside the Catholic Church this question has been the problem of the ages: Jesus Christ, was He a mere man, or was He God? We see that no sooner was Christ arisen from the dead and returned to the Father than heretics arose and questioned His Divinity. They conceded that while He was indeed a gifted man and one much favored by God, He was a mere creature, the son of Joseph the carpenter and Mary, his wife. Others held that He was a being sent by God or an emanation from God, and that His sufferings and death on the cross were not real, but simulated! Others, finally, continuing the slanders of His enemies during His life-time, pro-

claimed Him an impostor and an enemy of their race and nation; and hence, the Jews, the members of the Synagogue, tracked the footsteps of the Apostles everywhere, declaring Him to be but the son of earthly parents, so that they had again to emphasize their former teaching as to His Divinity. St. Paul, for instance, in his Epistle to the Ephesians repeats his oral teaching already given, saying, "How that *Jesus the Son of God* died and rose again, as the Scriptures had foretold," and St. Peter, renewing once again his glorious confession of Christ's Divinity made at Caesarea Philippi and in the temple, cries out: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His great mercy, hath regenerated us unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

2. It was in the generation succeeding that of the Apostles that two notorious heretics, Ebion and Cerinthus, again broached this heresy, and with such insistance and effect that St. John in his old age was obliged once more to vindicate the Godhead of his beloved Master. This he did in one of the most sublime passages of Scripture, which has earned for him the character of "eagle" among the writers of the Church. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and *the Word was God*. The same was in the beginning with God, all things were made by Him, and without Him was made nothing that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men; and the light shineth in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it . . . and

the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us. And," he continues, "we saw His glory, the glory that was befitting the Only-begotten of the Father."

Nor did speculation concerning the character and personality of Jesus Christ end with these early ages. In the beginning of the fourth century, Arius, a priest of Alexandria, originated the era of the great heresies by denying the Divinity of Jesus Christ and once more proclaiming Him a mere creature, a doctrine that drew upon him the condemnation of the first two general councils of the Church. In this heresy he died a most shameful and humiliating death at the hand of God as the chief heresiarch of the early Church.

Nor did the decision of the infallible Church vindicating the Godhead of Jesus Christ lay the question, but from the beginning of the fourth century to the end of the seventh were broached the great heresies of Nestorius, Eutiches, and others, so that for eight centuries the Church was disturbed by repeated uprisings of false teachers and erroneous teachings concerning the person of our Lord.

3. Now the importance and urgency of this question does not arise from those theological discussions and struggles of the early ages of the Church, but from the notorious fact that the same question of the Divinity of our Lord is a burning and bitter subject of contention in our own day and country.

You, my brethren, who are readers of current newspapers and magazines, must be fully aware that the question as to the Godhead of Jesus Christ is the

one great question that is debated by the leaders of every non-Catholic denomination throughout the length and breadth of America to-day. The subject that I am called upon to make a declaration on this evening is, then, no new one that has sprung up among us to-day or yesterday. It is the old, old subject discussed in the question first proposed to the Pharisees by our Lord Himself, preached universally by the Apostles, treated of in their epistles, and defined by the Catholic Church as an article of faith in the General Council of Nicaea, held in 325 under the presidency of the delegates of Pope St. Sylvester and the protection of Constantine the Great, the first Christian emperor.

Putting away, therefore, all side issues and supplementary questions, the one great point of doctrine that I want to emphasize and put before you is the Divinity of Jesus Christ our Lord, the Founder of our religion. The question is this: Was Jesus Christ wholly man, or was He also true Son of God, who became incarnate, that He might die for our Salvation?

II

1. Of this there can be no doubt; since it is taught universally by the infallible Church. It is proved moreover in innumerable ways, and by an infinity of arguments, drawn from the Scriptures and the Holy Fathers and Doctors. I need only refer to the words of the Eternal Father Himself. When Jesus was coming forth from the waters of the Jordan, as told

by St. Luke, "heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape, as a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven: 'Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased!' " (Luke III 21–22.)

This truth is further declared by the teaching and insistence of our Lord Himself. You have heard his question to the Pharisees, who claimed that He was but a mere son of David. "How," He argues, "if David, inspired by the Holy Ghost, calls Him Lord, how is He his son?" A father does not call his son, his lord, a reply that silenced His adversaries for all time; for the Gospel says they durst no longer question Him.

The same Divinity He claims at all times, as when He says: "I and the Father are one." "He that seeth Me, seeth the Father also." "My Father worketh till now, and I work," and in this character of Son of God He worked all His miracles and propounded all His teachings. Nay, He goes farther; when the High Priest in His Passion officially interrogated Him as to His relationship with the Father, saying, "I charge Thee by the Blessed God, tell us if Thou be the Son of God!" He replied: "Thou hast said it. Yes, I am." And it was for maintaining this truth that He died, as His enemies charged Him before Pontius Pilate: "This seducer deserves to die, because He maketh Himself out as the Son of God."

He goes farther still and makes the most astonishing incident of His career, His Resurrection from the dead, the one undeniable proof of His claim as Son of God. For when His enemies ignored all the proofs

of His Godhead: His miracles, His teaching, and even the clear allusions of Scripture itself, and audaciously inquired: How long wilt thou hold our souls in suspense: give us a sign, a proof of thy Godhead, He replied: "A wicked and unfaithful race seeketh a sign, and a sign shall not be given it, but the sign of the prophet, Jonas; for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so must the Son of Man be in the bowels of the earth three days and three nights."

This promise of a proof His enemies perfectly understood, and hence after His death they go to Pilate and say to him; "Sir, we have remembered that this seducer said, while he was yet alive: After three days I will rise again. Command, therefore, the sepulchre to be guarded until the third day, lest perhaps His disciples come and steal Him away and say to the people: He is risen from the dead; and the last error shall be worse than the first."

2. Time does not permit me to dilate on the proofs of the Divinity of Jesus Christ, which are innumerable. Let me only say that His Resurrection from the dead was the grand and altogether convincing one, was, moreover, the one great truth the preaching of which converted the world.

Take as an instance St. Peter's first great oration to the Jews, after the descent of the Holy Ghost—an oration that brought no less than three thousand converts to the faith; or, again, his oration in the temple on the occasion of the miracle of the cure of the lame man. "Ye men of Israel," he said, "why

wonder you at this, or why look ye upon us as if by our own strength or power we have made this man to walk. The God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers hath glorified His Son, Jesus, whom you indeed delivered up and denied before the face of Pilate when he judged He should be released. But you denied the Holy One and the Just and desired a murderer to be granted you. But the Author of life you killed, whom God hath raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses, and in the faith of His name this man whom you have seen and known hath His name strengthened, and the faith which is by Him hath given this perfect soundness in the sight of you all." . . .

In this one passage we have the convincing testimony of His Godhead, which we are bound to accept, and which has been accepted by the faithful in all ages.

Let me, then, conclude by reading for you a passage containing the dogma as defined by the Catholic Church, and proclaimed in the creed of Pope Pius IV, as professed by all Catholics and demanded as the profession of their faith by converts who would enter our holy religion:

"I believe in one only God, in three Divine Persons, distinct from and equal to each other, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. I believe in the doctrine of the Incarnation, Passion, Death, and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and the personal union of the two natures, the divine and the human: so help me God, and these holy Gospels, which I touch with my hand."

CHARACTERISTICS OF JESUS CHRIST

"I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh to the Father but by me." (*John xiv, 6.*)

1. Thus spoke our blessed Lord on the evening of the Last Supper. He had been preparing the minds of His disciples for the grief of His departure from among them, when Thomas interjected: "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?" The Saviour answered: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life," and "no man cometh to the Father but by Me."

That God was the knowable truth, and a certain life eternal, was known even to the pagan philosophers; but Christ, by proclaiming Himself the way also, shows us how we are to attain to a union with Him. It is by the imitation of His virtues. By studying His doctrines we arrive at the knowledge of the truth, which is Himself. He is the fountain of truth, and we imbibe His truth by studying the lessons He gave us. And by practising the Christian virtues we come into the possession of the life or union with God by love. Hence, He adds: "No man cometh to the Father but by Me."

2. Now, in studying the life of Christ, the first characteristic that strikes us is His sinlessness. And

this characteristic was so conspicuous in Him that even His enemies, who were ever carping at what He said and did, could find no tangible fault to lay hold on, so that He could challenge them and say: "Which of you shall convince Me of sin?"

In the imitation of our Lord the ultimate aim of our endeavors must be to attain a sinlessness like His. It is true, we can never attain to a perfect sinlessness in this life, for we carry ever within us the seeds of corruption; even the greatest saints never did attain to perfect sinlessness. But though we cannot attain to perfect sinlessness in this life, we can diminish indefinitely the commission of sin. And if we cannot wholly exterminate sin, we can at least make our sins and imperfections instruments of perfection by the contrition we have for them. In this we must do what a good housekeeper does in the keeping of her house, or what a careful gardener does in the care of his garden. Go into two houses or two gardens; you see one of these houses clean and neat; not a speck of dust on the floor or furniture; everything is in its place. There is a look of taste and refinement about the whole place. Go into the other; you see filth and disorder everywhere. And so with the gardens. That of the careful gardener has a look of care and industry all over it. The borders are trim; the trees and shrubs are pruned; there is no sign of weeds or overgrowth anywhere: the flowers and plants are healthy and luxuriant, while that of the sluggard offends you at every turn. Why this difference? Is it because no dust ever enters into the house of the good house-

keeper? or because no weeds ever crop up in the garden of the careful gardener? No; but because those persons are ever careful and industrious, and they have at heart the objects under their charge.

And so it must be with us in the government of our souls; we must be like good housekeepers, ever polishing and setting in order our furniture; we must be like careful gardeners, with hoe and pruning knife ever in hand, cutting away the weeds and overgrowth of venial sin. This is the Christian warfare that must ever go on in the Christian soul, a warfare against venial sin. It is a warfare that must be carried on, not around the walled city of the Commandments, but on the open plain of the Gospel counsels, where the devil cannot lay surprises for us, and it is only by thus waging a continuous warfare against venial sin that we can approximate to the sinlessness of Jesus Christ.

3. I have called the life of the good Christian a warfare. Now, in warfare, the commanders make a particular direction against the superior officers of the enemy. To this effect they have chosen bands of sharpshooters whose business it is to mark out and pick down the leaders, knowing well that if they are removed, the rank and file can be put into disorder and mowed down like stubble. Brethren, in the fight for virtue we have opposed to us superior foes who are more subtle than others, and who are as the officers who make use of the others, and the chief of those is pride.

This vice is at the back of all those acts that bring

about our fall. It is the source of that self-confidence that makes us trust in our own powers, of that self-seeking that draws us to the commission of nearly all our sins, of that sullen humor that prevents us from receiving well correction for our faults, of that love of success and striving after distinction and posts of trust. It was it that first made its appearance in God's universe in heaven and in Paradise. It is the one that resists God most and prevents the entrance of grace into our souls. And hence, in return, as we are told in Sacred Scripture, "God resists the proud." "He casts down the mighty," that is, the arrogant, "from their seats." And why? Because pride is a falsehood and a robbery.

Pride is a falsehood; and the God of truth cannot bear a falsehood. It assumes to itself what it does not possess. St. Bernard describes humility, the virtue opposed to pride, as truth—the acknowledgment of ourselves such as we are before God and man. The proud do not acknowledge themselves such as they are. Like Satan, while being in reality vile creatures, they would make it appear that they are as gods.

Pride is a robbery. It strives to take from God what is His. The proud ever seek their own glory, when glory belongs to God alone. It is the prerogative that He is most jealous of. He is goodness itself. Hence, He gives us all goods, health, talents, riches, grace, and so forth; for, goodness is diffusive of itself; but glory He will have for Himself alone. Nor can He do otherwise, for His perfection demands that all His gifts return to Him.

Well, pride comes and tries to push God from His glory seat, to set up a rival throne. The proud would have all worship them. This God cannot bear. "He resisteth the proud." "He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their hearts." "He hath put down the mighty from their seats." And holy writers interpreting passages such as these say that pride and love of dominion are a sure mark of reprobation.

This intolerable tyrant that opposes God's rights must then be laid low in every quarter in which it makes its appearance, whether in love of success for its own sake, or in love of office, or in self-seeking, or in a sullen humor that resists correction, or in any way seeking human glory in our actions, because it is a falsehood and a robbery.

4. We must, on the contrary, lay hold on the truth, which is humility, by the imitation of Jesus Christ. And to this salutary practice He invites us in a special appeal. "Learn of Me," He says, "for I am meek and humble of heart."

Yes, Jesus was humble. Humility was His second characteristic, and it must be ours also, because it is in truth the hidden principle of sinlessness. St. Augustine asks the question: "What is the beginning of perfection?" and he answers, "Humility." "What is the progress of perfection?" And again he answers, "Humility." "And what is the completion of perfection?" Once again, "Humility." St. Francis calls humility by the endearing name of sister. It is a virtue which attracts all by its beauty, even God Himself, and, hence, Scripture says: "The proud, God sees

afar off," that is, He keeps them at a distance from Him; "but His eyes are ever turned towards the meek and humble." "He hath lifted the poor man from the dunghill," that is, from the humble knowledge of himself, "and hath placed him with the princes of His kingdom." And the Blessed Mother sings in her canticle: "He hath looked down on the humility of His handmaid, and behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."

In order to lead us to the practice of this virtue, see the many examples of humility given by our Blessed Lord. He willed to be born of poor parents, to lead an obscure life. He bore contradiction with meekness. He washed His disciples' feet. He died an ignominious death on the cross. If we would be humble, we must court humiliations, and perform acts of humility without number; for all the moral virtues are acquired and preserved by repetition of their acts; and so humility, also.

5. Lastly, by laying hold on the truth, which as I have said, is the humility of Jesus Christ, we attain to life. He is the Life essential, and all supernatural perfection is a participation in the essential life of God. By laying hold of the truth, which is humility, we attain the life of our souls. For God gives His grace to the humble. And by grace we are made conformable to the suffering life of the Redeemer. This was His third characteristic: suffering, sorrow. He came into the world amid suffering. "He was in labors from His youth." Privation was His normal state.

Persecution was His portion in life. The cross was always in His heart.

Now, the more we conform to the life of Jesus Christ, the more we put on Jesus Christ, the more we shall have to suffer. Sacrifice and suffering were the lot of the saints. Who could be more closely united to Jesus Christ than he who said, "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me"? And "I know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified"? And "God forbid that I should glory in anything save in the Cross of my Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified in me, and I to the world"?

Let us endeavor to approximate to the sinlessness of Jesus Christ by waging a continual warfare against venial sin, and by the practice of a sincere humility; that so we may attain to the most privileged of all lives, namely, a participation in the suffering and crucified life of Jesus Christ, which is a sure way to the possession of eternal beatitude.

Introduction

"*I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd giveth his life for his sheep.*" (*John x, 11.*)

1. Our Lord is wont in the gospel to represent Himself to us under various figures, sometimes homely, sometimes tender, always noble and inspiring, and this in order to express the capacity in which He appears amongst us, or the relations He comes to establish with us as our Lord, Saviour, and Judge. Thus, He says to us: "I am the light of the world"; "I am the true vine"; "I am the bread of life"; "I am the door"; "I am the way, and the truth, and the life."

He represents Himself to us in the parables, now as the heavenly sower scattering the seed of His divine Word in the hearts of men; now as the prudent merchant who gives all that He has to purchase the precious pearl of men's souls; now as the fisherman who casts the net of His world-wide apostolate into the sea of humanity and draws out fishes, both good and bad.

He is the Good Samaritan come down from the heavenly Jerusalem to cure poor stricken humanity

fallen by the wayside and rifled of its patrimony by the infernal robber. He is the father of the prodigal, receiving back with love and tenderness His poor erring child. Or, He is, finally, a great landholder calling to account His servants and rewarding them for their labor in His service with an eternal reward.

But in all the various figures under which He represents Himself to us in the Gospel, there is not one more tender and soul-inspiring, not one that pictures more clearly the intimate and personal relations He, as our God and Redeemer, has with us, than this discourse or parable of the Good Shepherd.

2. To understand how applicable this discourse was to the people whom He addressed, and to take in for our own benefit and instruction the beautiful and tender relations He has with us, we must take into account the circumstances of the place, the climate, and the daily wants of the sheep, as well as the duties, mode of life, and dangers incident to the life of the oriental shepherd. His audience had only to look around them to see flocks of sheep and goats browsing on the gray Judean hillsides. They were aware of the scanty pasturage those hills provided during the long, dry season of the year. They saw in different sheltered hollows those various sheepfolds made of mounds of heaped-up stones, and covered with brushwood and thorns to keep out the prowling wolf and the mountain lion. There also were the wells with the drinking troughs, to which the different shepherds led their flocks at evening and provided them with cool, refreshing water.

The shepherd himself lived not only for, but with his sheep. At day he wandered over the hills and guarded his charges from the rapacious beasts that infested the country. He took care lest they should get entangled in the patches of scrub which in parts abounded, or he sought them out when they wandered alone into unfrequented places in search of food or adventure, to the great danger of their lives. At evening he gave his well-known call or whistle, and instantly the sheep began to tend towards the sheepfold, to be enclosed for protection during the night when wild beasts prowled about for their destruction. There he shut himself up with his flock, taking care to close and bar behind him the narrow door which might give entrance to the thief, to be up at the first streak of dawn to lead his flock to fresh pastures, numbering them as they passed out, or gamboled around him and behind him, for on him they depended for their all.

Moreover, he knew each of them individually, and their several wants and infirmities, for the flocks were, as a rule, not very large. And as he lived with them continually, they knew his call and obeyed it with marvelous fidelity. This recognition and obedience was most remarkable at the drinking troughs, where the shepherds gathered their flocks about the same hour. Here where they got all commingled, and where usually they could be numbered by thousands, each shepherd at a time gave his peculiar call, and at once a commotion began to be observed among the numbers congregated. The sheep of each flock com-

menced to disentangle themselves from those of the stranger flocks and to take the path that led towards their own fold, without a single one remaining behind, and this without the help of crook or dog, but through inveterate habit acquired from birth.

Sometimes, a lion or a crouching panther with a bound bare down on some unfortunate member of the flock, and then the courage and fidelity of the shepherd were put to the test. If he were a good shepherd, as were David and others to whom reference is made in Sacred Scripture, he would make straight for the fierce beast, and with crook or sling defend his helpless charge, even with danger to his life; whereas, if he were a hireling, he would slink away, leaving it to be devoured by its enemy, and this, says Our Lord, "because he was a hireling and had no care for his sheep." All this helps us, dearly beloved, to appreciate the statements and tender allusions contained in this beautiful parable.

I

1. Christ represents Himself under the figure of the Good Shepherd, and us under that of His flock. "But we are the people of His pasture," says Scripture, "and the sheep of His hand." He signalizes two or three of the characteristics of the Good Shepherd and shows us how He fills them. He says that, "He knows His sheep, and that He even calls them by name." He tells us that "when He hath let out His sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow

Him." Finally, He testifies that the Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. In other words, our Lord makes known to us how, in the care of us, His people, He has shown vigilance, and generosity, and example.

Yes, dearly beloved, Jesus Christ, our Good Shepherd, has watched over us and provided for all our wants, and in the exercise of this function we will consider Him to-day.

What has He not done to prove His care and providence over us? Reflect on all that Jesus Christ as our God does and has done for us. He nourishes us. He clothes us. He has given us all that we have and are. For our material well-being how has He not brought into being all kinds of goods—the sun to shine on us and gladden us with light and warmth?—the earth, what is it but a richly spread out table, where all kinds of good things are provided for us?—the sea, the elements, the heavenly bodies, all things, are they not made to minister to our comfort and happiness? And for our spiritual well-being, see what graces He has provided to help us? Did He not institute the Sacraments to refresh our souls and nourish them with His graces? How many calls, and lights, and warnings has He not given us in life, and for our pasture has He not provided for us the delicious banquet of His own most precious Body and Blood?

2. But it is not alone that this Good Shepherd of our souls has watched over us in general and provided for our spiritual and temporal needs. He knows each

of us individually, our wants, our aspirations, our trials, our sorrows, our dangers. He knows the many enemies that seek our destruction, and He wards off their harmful attacks. And for our consolation and joy He has taught us to address Him as Father, "Our Father," which He truly is, and to ask Him in this beautiful prayer for all that could be needful to us.

He even follows us in our wanderings and with infinite fatigue and sorrow seeks us out amid the thorns and briars of sin.

Do you wish to know the pains and trouble to which our Good Shepherd has gone in search of His wandering sheep? You have only to open the Gospel and see the record of them. Count, if you can, all His steps and follow Him in all the journeys He made in order to find them and bring about their return. See Him seeking out one of His sheep, when overcome by weariness and hunger He sits on Jacob's well. It was there, St. John tells us, that He converted the Samaritan woman. See Him in the house of Simon the leper, seeking another sheep. It was the Magdalen. For, if she came to seek Jesus Christ in the house of the Pharisee, it was only by the motion of the Saviour's quickening grace, which touched her heart and led her steps. See this Divine Shepherd seeking out another of His sheep. It was from the custom-house at Capharnaum that He called St. Matthew, whom He afterwards changed into a shepherd, and from the sycamore tree He called Zachaeus, the chief of the publicans of Jerico, whom tradition points out afterwards as the noted hermit. St. Amadour (the

Lover), whose shrine is still held in honor in the south of France.

Behold, His heart moved with compassion over all those poor wandering and dispersed sheep of the House of Israel. He gave Himself no rest, either by night or by day, running through the villages, hamlets, cities, deserts, in search of souls, beseeching His Father with ardent and vehement cries for their salvation, and at last sacrificing Himself for them upon the Cross, to purchase them from the death which they had merited.

Oh! How often did He not wish to gather all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, all the Jews, and all men, "as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and they would not." We should have to enter into the adorable Heart of this Divine Shepherd to be able to measure "the length, and the breadth, and the height, and the depth" of the charity He had for men.

See Him on the Cross, where, although His hands were attached with rough nails, this could not prevent Him from snatching from the devil one of His sheep which that devouring lion already looked upon as his assured prey. That was the good thief. See Him come down once again from Heaven. It was with the express purpose of finding a wandering sheep, St. Paul, whom He found on the road to Damascus. Finally, consider Him in Heaven praying to His Father without ceasing for the conversion and salvation of His sheep, and ready to descend anew if it were necessary and to immolate Himself for a single one of us. Oh, it is here, then, that we ought to say

with St. Paul that "the charity of Christ presseth us," and demandeth the return of our hearts to Him. For it is not enough that we admire the vigilance and the charity and the sacrifice of our Good Shepherd towards us; we must on our part strive to second His beneficent designs. We must show ourselves docile sheep, keep close to Him, look up to Him for help and guidance, and depend upon Him.

II

1. A second characteristic of the Good Shepherd is that "He goeth before His sheep, and they follow Him." Here again Jesus Christ has shown us that He is truly the Good Shepherd, in that He goes before us and sets us an example in welldoing. He does not ask us to practise any virtue, to bear any trial or opposition, to make any sacrifice that He Himself has not given us the example of. Study the life of Jesus Christ on earth. What a sublime example He gives us during His whole career! What humility, what charity, what generosity, what love of God and man! And what generous actions done on their behalf! His life, was it not one of prayer and mortification? Consider Him in His infancy, in His boyhood, in His public mission, where He shows Himself God and true Son of Man on the one hand, by His preaching and miracles; and, our model, on the other, by His mildness, humility and love. Oh, yes, He goes before us by the splendor of His actions and His virtues, as He said: "I have given you an example, that, as I

have done, you also should do," and by His personal appeal made to us, not once, but many times, during His public career, when He says: "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart."

And as to His Passion, is it not an abyss of mysteries and virtues that no created mind can fathom? Who can conceive the greatness of the example given us in the mysterious prayer in the Garden of Gethsemani?—the strength, the love, the heroism of His crucifixion, the forbearance shown towards His enemies. His mildness towards the unfaithful disciples? The whole drama of the Passion, is it not an exhibition of virtue the like of which was never before shown in the world, and from which we may learn in every vicissitude and emergency of our earthly career?

2. But the misfortune is, dearly beloved, that we do not study the example given us by our Lord during His mortal life. We do not hear His voice. We are deaf to the pleadings His example makes to us to follow Him. We do not seek to know Him or to imitate Him. All occupied with worldly thoughts and concerns we give little thought to the high life of virtue to which He has called us as Christians, and the rewards He has in store for those who so hear and follow Him. "With desolation is the whole land made desolate, because there is no one who thinketh in the heart."

III

But let us go on to consider His courage, and the sacrifice He has undergone for us. "I am the Good

Shepherd," He says, "and I lay down My life for My sheep."

The infernal wolf had come down on the fold. He seduced the sheep. He enslaved them. He robbed them of their heavenly patrimony.

The whole world was a charnel house of sin and misery, and no man was found to remedy the evil.

But the Good Shepherd was faithful to His flock. He came down from Heaven. He opened war on the infernal tyrant. "He drew us out of the jaws of the lion" and "carried us upon His shoulders rejoicing," torn and bleeding as we were, at every pore. And as the boy, David with his crook and sling slew the lion and the bear that attacked the fold; so Jesus Christ, by the power of His Cross, rescued the souls of His people from the slavery to sin and death. He did more. He opened to us the Eternal Gates that were closed against us since the Fall, and gave us access to the Father of Mercies. But this He did only by the sacrifice of His Life on Calvary. "I am the Good Shepherd," He says, "and I lay down My life for My sheep."

Dearly beloved, how can we ever repay the generosity and the sacrifices of our Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, towards us? And if He has shown such courage and generosity in redeeming us, how can we doubt His goodness towards us, or imagine that He will stop at any sacrifice to protect and save us? Here it is that our trust must be without bounds, and our love and gratitude equally boundless. And this is what St. Bernard, reminds us of, when he says: "The measure

of our love for God must be to love Him without measure."

Let this be the resolution that we make to-day as the practical result of the love and goodness shown us by Our Lord in the discourse of the Good Shepherd. And as it is the part of the good sheep to know the good shepherd, to hear his voice, and follow him, let us resolve to study Jesus Christ, who is seen in every truth of our holy religion, and the knowing of whom is, as He tells us, "eternal life." Let us fulfill His laws, and practise His virtues.

CHRIST'S TENDERNESS FOR THE POOR

Preached in The Cathedral of Newry, Ireland, in aid of The St. Vincent de Paul Society.

I

"I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with Me now three days and have not what to eat: and I will not send them away fasting lest they faint in the way." (*Matt. xv, 32.*)

So spoke our Blessed Redeemer, and never before had there fallen on the ears of man words of sympathy so human and, at the same time, so divine.

1. It was on the occasion of His taking a little rest amid the mountains of Galilee. He had just returned from the coast of Sidon, where He set free the daughter of a pagan woman possessed by a devil.

But the multitude followed Him into the mountains; nor did they in their eagerness to hear His heavenly doctrine think of procuring food for themselves, till now they began to be oppressed with hunger. And the tender Father of His people was moved to perform the astounding miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, saying, "I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days and have not what to eat, and I

will not send them away fasting lest they faint in the way."

But now, it seems to me, our Lord's feeling of compassion must not be understood as having reference merely to the hungry crowd around Him. It extended to that greater multitude of men and women of every age who suffer and who, in their own persons, bear the evils come upon the world by sin. And from that mountain of Galilee the Lord looked down the centuries to come, and he saw all those who were to pass their lives in misery; and at the sad spectacle of human ills His infinitely charitable heart was moved with a compassion tender, active, beneficent, which was the principle of His life of labor, and sorrow, and sacrifice, that would not be satisfied till He shed the last drop of His Blood upon the Cross.

2. All this coming from one who claimed to be the Son of God was a revelation to the people of His time. What were the notions that prevailed amongst men at this epoch in regard to the deity whom they worshipped; and what were their own sentiments in regard to the poor?

Those who professed a belief in one God represented Him as a high and haughty God who, wrapped up in His Divinity, living on the confines of the universe, had no concern for, or sympathy with men. Others, the votaries of those religions that professed a belief in many gods, and they took in nearly all the cultured nations of antiquity, were led to believe that that shabby rout of gods and goddesses who inhabited Olympus were too much occupied with

flirting and courtly jealousies to have a permanent interest in human affairs.

And the pagans themselves, the lordly pagans who had vast stores of wealth, how did they regard the great world of suffering humanity that surged beneath them as they rolled along in chariots ornamented with ivory and gold? Did they not look upon the multitudes as a vile rabble to be contemned, to be trampled on, to be mulcted, to be given up to the sword; or, worse still, to be devoted to the horrors of the brothel or the arena in order to content those stormy passions of sensuality, and hatred, and ambition, that raged alternately within their unhallowed breasts?

Even the Jews, the favored people of God, though they were told in their law to give alms out of their abundance to supply the needs of the poor, only too often complied with these precepts out of the merely human motives of ambition and self-love. And if they performed works of charity, it was with a narrow racial prejudice that looked only to a sufferer of their own race, whilst the afflictions of other races they regarded not. And as to the afflicted ones themselves, what recourse had they in their afflictions, and where were they to look for help in their needs which were pressing and incessant then as now?

They had one recourse, and only one, which the laws of the time held out to them. When the poor plebeian, for instance, was pressed down with debts which he had contracted in his efforts to sustain his family; when he found at last the wolf of hunger at the door,

and saw his starving wife and children around him clamoring for bread, what recourse had he? He could divest himself of his manhood, of his liberty, and become a slave of his debtor, who took over his wife and children to share in his degradation.

In the midst of such a world, and in the face of such notions on the part of gods and men, broke forth the ringing words of the Saviour proclaiming His commiseration for the poor: "I have compassion on the multitude."

But it was not alone that human sufferings and human sorrows touched the compassionate Heart of the Saviour. One of the great purposes of His life on earth was to soften human nature steeled by selfishness and pride, and to teach a corrupt and degenerate race the great doctrine of the brotherhood of man. To this effect would He have His diciples share His sentiments and second Him in His charitable ministrations to the poor. To this effect would He have them share with the hungry ones their own scanty provision of loaves and fishes, which, also, by an extraordinary miracle, He caused to multiply between their hands. To this effect would He give power to His disciples to work miracles on behalf of the afflicted. And, hence, His injunction to them when He sent them on their mission: "And going, preach; 'the Kingdom of God is at hand'; heal the sick; raise the dead; cleanse the lepers; cast out devils; freely have you received, freely give."

3. That the Church has caught His spirit, and that she has caused a feeling of sympathy and active

charity to act like a leaven among her children, is shown by her works through all the centuries of her existence down to the present day.

Are there poor widows and orphans in Jerusalem and the other cities newly converted to Christianity? We see the early Christians sell their goods and distribute the proceeds according as each one has need. Is Judea afflicted with famine, or has a great calamity fallen on the people of Macedonia? We are shown the faithful of Corinth and the other Grecian cities collect alms and send them by the hands of St. Paul to be distributed among the inhabitants of the afflicted provinces.

Are there needy ones to be found in all the newly formed churches? We see St. Paul and his companions labor with their hands, not only to sustain themselves, but to present doles to the poor. Are there generous men and women to be found in the church who aspire to higher sanctity than that of the ordinary faithful? We see them carry out literally the injunction of our Blessed Lord to the young man in the Gospel by selling all their earthly possessions and giving them to the poor in order to follow Him in voluntary poverty. Are there confessors in bonds for the name of Jesus Christ? The faithful flock to their prison cells carrying with them stores of provisions and other necessaries. And so well was this spirit of sympathy and active charity known to the people of their time that even the pagans were struck with it, and compelled to cry out in admiration: "See how the Christians love one another!"

All the centuries of the Church's life tell the same tale, and we witness in her that spirit of charity that urges her ever to seek out suffering and sorrow, and relieve it according to her resources and the sufferers' needs.

Does slavery exist with all its accompanying degradation and moral and physical evils? Scarcely is the Gospel preached in a country, but we see the chains begin to be struck off the weary limbs and man begin to be restored to his liberty and manhood once again. Does serfdom lay its galling hand on the neck of the poor man and bind him to the earth, as Prometheus to his rock? The Church again intervenes, and by laws just and humane softens the rigors of serfdom and vindicates the poor man's right to live and prosper on the fruit of the sweat of his brow, and the labor of his hands. Or, is the poor tradesman robbed of the fruit of his labors by the steel-clad baron and his band of armed men? The Spouse of Christ comes to his cabin-door and whispers to him the secret of his strength. She gathers together the scattered units of downtrodden humanity, binds them into the powerful friendly guilds and Catholic associations which form so striking a feature of the town life of the middle ages, and teaches them to withstand the exactions of the powerful barons, and win for themselves their independence and their civic rights.

II

1. But the Church was not content with securing the general welfare of the toiler and the poor. She

would carry her benign mission to the homes where suffering reigned; would seek out and relieve poverty and want; cheer the drooping brow; and lift the black cloud of despond that lay on many a home. And hence, in all ages, those numerous charitable institutions where every form of human misery is attended to, and organization, and science, and worldly wealth are devoted to the relief of the suffering members of Jesus Christ.

Behold those vast corporations of religious men of the middle and later ages, at whose friendly hospice thousands received their daily meals, and were attended to in their bodily and spiritual needs. Nay, and she beholds her consecrated sons devote themselves to the cause of the poor slave, and with a heroism that could be begotten only by divine love, go forth into infidel lands and ransom the poor captive at the price of their own liberty and life.

I thank God our own age also is fruitful in such institutions, and there is no form of distress that is not sought out and relieved by the ever active charity of the Church.

2. Now, among the organizations that have sprung up in the Church for the relief of the poor there is one as unique in its character as it is powerful in its influence for good; and it is that which is so familiarly known to you all as the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. This admirable Society, catholic in its objects as is the Church herself, devotes itself to the amelioration of the condition of the poor by all and every means at its disposal, and puts no limits to

its ministrations other than the entire fulfillment of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. This, its labors in every corner of our country, as is shown by the report I hold in my hand, testify—the visitation of the sick—the housing of the poor—the burying of the dead—the relief of every form of suffering and distress—the education of the young—the spread of the knowledge of Christian doctrine among those whose religious education was neglected in their youth—the administration of the Sacraments—the instruction in a life of piety—the protection of the widow and the orphan—all these and many more form the duties of the members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, as that noble record of a year's work testifies.

This Society, I am happy to see, exists among you here; nay thrives, as the figures in this report go on to show; and its existence and prosperity, I have no doubt, are a source of grace to the whole town, as they are a source of consolation and hope to the poor and the afflicted themselves.

2. But all this good work done involves the expenditure of considerable sums of money. And that their labors may not be crippled by want of funds they appeal to you through me to remember your former generosity, and by your contributions put such a sum in their hands as will enable them to tide over the liabilities of the year. The calls on their resources are, as you are aware, pressing and incessant; for, indeed, we can say in the words of our Lord: "The poor we have always with us," and scarcely ever did poverty and wretchedness press more heavily on our

poor people than they do to-day. Aye, and the members of the Society have a wide field for their ministrations in this town, where so many poor tradesmen and factory hands are congregated; for it is among these classes that the privations of poverty are most felt.

You think you see misery stand by you in the street in the person of the beggar-man or woman? You think you have seen it in the wards of our hospitals and workhouses? No! it is not in the rags of the beggar, it is not in our great public institutions where the poor are congregated, and to the comparative shelter of whose wards they were driven by the pangs of real misery at home: it is not there you will find the real wretchedness which poverty, joined with other evils, entails. To come to a true notion of it you will have to accompany the priest on his daily round of visits among the poor; or, rather, you will have to accompany the members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul to the hovel of the poor laborer out of work; to the bed of the sick mother with her five or six little children clamoring around her for bread; you will have to go with him to see the young widow sitting in despair in the midst of her houseful of tender offspring, while the breadwinner, the father of those pale-faced children, lies in his new-made grave. You will have to see those barefooted little ones crouch around the cheerless hearth in cold weather, while the rain beats mercilessly through the roof. You will have to see those little ones during those cold December nights struggling for the corner of the threadbare

blanket which is all that screens them from the frosty air without.

To come to a true notion of the wretchedness which extreme poverty entails you will, I say, have to visit the poor in their homes. And if you would at the same time form a true idea of the dignity of man sustained by faith and trust in God; if you would be edified by a patience above the power of human nature—look at the sublime example of resignation and cheerfulness of the poor in the midst of the privations and the ruin that surrounds them.

Well, dearly beloved, it is to such objects of charity that the money you contribute to-day will be devoted. Not a penny of it will go to minister to the comfort of that well-paid army of officials through whom the State doles out charity.

The members of the Society appeal to you to-day to contribute a portion of that means with which God has blessed you to enable them to carry out their work of mercy; and in appealing to you they feel they are tapping a rich mine of charity that has never yet failed.

3. I am aware of the many calls on your means in these times of widespread depression; but still, I feel there is a mite at your disposal for the poor. And in appealing to you I ask you, first of all, to consult your own native generosity; and after that to think of Christ's poor. Yes, think of the poor factory girl with the grip of the disease that is to be her death already fastened upon her, yet with a heroism superior to her nature and her sex going daily to her work to

earn the scanty wages that are to keep her and her aged mother from the poor-house. Remember the poor man rising in the morning from his bed of straw, and going in his thin coat to work in face of the chill blasts of wintry weather. Think of the poor little half-timers laboring in the factories in which they wear out their young lives in work unsuited to their tender years. Think of the tender babe, with the pinch of hunger imprinted on its infant brow, tugging uselessly at those breasts that have run dry from sheer starvation. Aye, and look, furthermore, to the reward which a generous and grateful Judge will give, and which is promised, mind you, to charity, and charity alone. "I was hungry [in the person of My poor], and you did give Me to eat: I was thirsty, and you did give Me to drink: I was naked, and you clothed Me: I was sick and in bonds, and you came to see Me. Come, therefore, ye blessed of My Father and possess the kingdom that was prepared for you from the beginning of the world. For, Amen, I say to you, that whatsoever you did for one of those little ones that believe in Me, you did it for Myself who am their Father and their Friend."

I

"Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man. For, He shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon, and after they have scourged Him they will put Him to death, and the third day He shall arise again." (*Luke xviii, 31–33.*)

1. To the thoughtful observer of the Church's spiritual life the prominence given by her to devotion to the Passion of our Lord is very striking and impressive. And this feeling is in no way lessened by the consciousness of the overshadowing importance to mankind of that great tragedy. Everything in connection with our Lord's life on earth is, we know, superhuman and divine; and everything points onward to the consummation of His life's work, the Redemption.

But still, in Christian worship, devotion to the Passion seems to dominate everything. Thus, we have that beautiful series of Passion feasts celebrated weekly from Septuagesima Sunday to Easter. Other feasts commemorative of the Passion are met with up and down the calendar. One whole week, the "Great

Week" by eminence of the year, is devoted to it. The whole season of Lent is tinged with the same devotion. Even the triumphal note of the Easter canticle is softened by a tender strain reminiscent of the Cross of Calvary.

And as to popular devotions, behold these walls decorated with scenes from the Passion; your beads which invite you to tell your sorrowful mysteries; every object of church use or worship marked with the sign of the cross; your meditations, your private devotions, all redolent of the mystery of the Passion and death of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

2. Now, why all this? What is the reason for this persistent devotion of the Church to the mystery of the Passion.

There are many reasons, to one or two of which I wish to invite your attention to-day. The first is that keeping continually before our minds the Passion of our Lord is of all occupations the most agreeable to God. That it is so is shown from this, that it was the most ordinary occupation of our Lord, of His Blessed Mother and the saints. And first, Jesus Christ, "the Author and Finisher of our faith," not only suffered with joy the cruel punishment of the Cross, "despising the shame and ignominy that were attached to it": He furthermore took pleasure in thinking of it and was occupied with it during His whole life. The desire He had of accomplishing on this point the will of His Eternal Father, kept Him continually applied to it. Hence it was that He entertained Himself so often on it with His disciples. "I have a Baptism

wherewith I am to be baptized" (i. e., in His own Blood), "and how am I straightened until it be accomplished."

Mark how in the text of the Gospel He recounts to them all the circumstances of His Passion. "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all that has been foretold of the Son of Man shall be accomplished. He shall be delivered, not only to the cruelty of the Jews, but from them He shall pass into the hands of the Gentiles." Behold the treason! "He shall be mocked, and spit upon, and scourged," and "after scourging Him they shall put Him to death." To which He added, in order to console them, that "He shall rise again the third day."

Thus, it was not only when He was apprehended by the soldiers, or when He saw the Cross on which He was to be affixed, or when He heard the streets of Jerusalem resound with those awful cries: "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" that He thought of His Passion and death. He thought of it from the first moment of His conception. He had no sooner taken a body than He considered that it was to be one day immolated in the place of skulls for the salvation of sinners.

If, on coming into the world, He is placed on a bed of straw, He thinks that He will one day lie on the harder bed of the Cross. If some drops of blood are shed by Him at the Circumcision, He represents to Himself that much more will be drawn from Him in the hall of Pilate and on Calvary. If He is carried to the temple to be offered to His Father as the sole

victim capable of appeasing Him, He looks on this "morning sacrifice" as a sure presage of the "evening sacrifice" which is to end His life. "My life," says He through the mouth of the prophet, "commenced in sorrows; it continued in labors; it will end in sufferings."

Hence it was that the sons of Zebedee, having presented themselves to Him, with their mother to petition Him that He would give them the first places in His Kingdom, He asked them, as St. Matthew relates, "if they could drink of the chalice which He was about to drink." St. Mark relates the incident a little otherwise, and says that He wished to know of them "if they could drink of the chalice which He was drinking, and could be baptized with the Baptism wherewith He was being baptized?" putting the present for the future.

"Alas, Lord!" permit us to ask You, "what chalice are You now drinking? You preach; You instruct the people; You work miracles which draw on You the esteem and admiration of the whole world. Do You call that a chalice?" "Yes, My disciples, there is a chalice that I am drinking and a Baptism of Blood that I receive. I see this Baptism of Blood as if I were already attached to the pillar and the Cross. I walk in the sight of this cruel and ignominious death, which is prepared for Me on Calvary."

But what is still more surprising is that He wills to entertain Himself with it even on Thabor, with Moses and Elias, amid the joys and glory of His Transfiguration. "He spoke," says St. Luke, "of the

excess of His sufferings, and of the manner in which He was to end His life in Jerusalem." Thus, you see, my friends, that the Cross of Jesus Christ was not a passing object for Him. He had it always before His eyes. He was always thinking of it. He never lost sight of it from the commencement to the consummation of His sacrifice.

II

1. The saints, treading in the footsteps of their divine Master, have had a tender and affecting devotion for His Passion. But among all the saints none was more deeply touched by it than the holy Virgin. Her heart was pierced with the "sword of sorrow," according to the prophecy of the venerable Simeon, not only when she was at the foot of the Cross, and when she saw her cherished Son die, but during her whole life. The remembrance of a God dying on a cross for sinners was for her a sort of martyrdom more cruel than death itself; and the Church has no difficulty in applying to this blessed Mother compassionating the sufferings of Jesus Christ, her Son, those words of the prophet Jeremias: "O all you who pass by the way, attend, and see if there be sorrow like to my sorrow?"

2. If, from the Blessed Virgin we pass to the Apostles, we see in Scripture that they were not only the witnesses of all our Lord suffered, but that they were, moreover, the zealous preachers of it. Their great care and application were to inflame the hearts

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of all their hearers with the love of God crucified. They were never ashamed of the Cross. They preached it to all the peoples of the earth. They said with St. Paul: "We preach Christ, and Him crucified." They were so full of this thought that the Apostle, writing to the Hebrews, exhorted them to meditate upon it continually. "Remember Him who bore such contradiction from sinners, in order that you may not be wearied, failing in your souls." Weigh well that expression as represented in the Latin, "*Recogitate*." It is as if he said to them: "Think, and think again, over Him who suffered from sinners so great a contradiction, in order that you may not lose courage and fall into dejection amid the evils that you suffer."

It is not alone for some hours, or even some days, St. Paul would have us meditate on this great subject; He would have us occupy ourselves with it even till the second coming of Jesus Christ. "You shall announce the death of the Lord until He come,"—which comprises all the ages of the Church, and all the time of our life. For the coming of the Lord for us will be at the end of our life, as it will be at the end of the world for the whole Church. Even till then the death of Jesus Christ must be announced, not only at the altar in the celebration of the Holy Mysteries, but, furthermore, all the true disciples of our Lord will make it a duty to meditate on it: "You shall announce the death of the Lord until He come."

3. O my brethren, since the principal occupation of our Lord upon earth was to think of the cruel death to which He saw Himself condemned for sin; since

this was the great devotion of the most holy Virgin, the Apostles, and the early Christians, and other holy personages, of whom it would take too long to give you examples; for all made profession of saying with St. Paul, "I live in the faith of the Son of God who loved me, and who delivered Himself for me,"—in a word, since the whole Church makes the Passion of our Saviour the principal object of its piety, its love and gratitude towards God, let us meditate upon it; embrace it, and occupy ourselves all our life with a practice so holy.

DEVOTION TO THE PASSION. II

I

1. A second reason why we should cultivate a life-long tender devotion to the Passion of our Lord is because it is one that contributes most effectually to our spiritual well-being. That it does so, is shown from this, that it is the most efficacious means, to turn us away from sin and to urge us to the practice of virtue.

We read in Sacred Scripture that when the Israelites were passing through the desert, the greater number murmured against God. And God, to punish them, sent amongst them fiery serpents, that is, serpents whose bite burned like fire. This plague caused such desolation among the people that the most seditious changed their murmurs into prayers and tears. They came to Moses and begged him to have pity on them and to stop the plague. Moses humbly

carried their petitions before God, who, allowing Himself to be softened by the prayers of this holy man, commanded him to make a brazen serpent, and to set it for a sign on the top of a standard. At the same time He assured him that those who, being bitten, would look upon it, would be cured—as afterwards happened.

It is not the interpreters of Scripture: it is Jesus Christ Himself who has explained of Himself and of His Cross this excellent figure, which had been a visible prophecy of it 1,300 years before His death. "As Moses," He says, "lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting." "What is the uplifted serpent?" asks St. Augustine. "It is Jesus Christ, dead and lifted on the Cross." As those who looked upon the brazen serpent lifted up in the desert were cured of the poisoned bite of the serpents; so those who with faith and piety look upon Jesus lifted on the Cross, will be cured of the bite of the infernal serpent and of the deadly wound of sin.

2. In truth, there is no vice for which we do not find a remedy in the consideration of a God suffering for us. What impurity that will not be cured by the contemplation of the cruel scourging which this Man-God, become "a Man of sorrows," has suffered to expiate our sensuality? What avarice that will not be cured by reflecting on the extreme poverty of the Son of God dying naked on the Cross? What pride that will not be cured by the sight of the infinite

patience of the Saviour keeping silence when He is charged with injuries, and when He is unjustly condemned to death? What desire of revenge that will not be cured by the charity of the Saviour praying for His executioners and asking pardon of His Father for those who unjustly condemned Him to death? "Father," He says, "forgive them." No, dearly beloved, there is no remedy like this to quell our passions, and to cure us of the wound of sin.

3. My brethren, you complain of the strength of your temptations and of the difficulties of avoiding sin. Here, then, is your remedy. For, had you a heart of stone, meditation on the death of Jesus Christ is capable of softening it. Your hearts are surely not more obdurate than were those of the Jews. Behold, then, what the prophet Zachary says: "I will pour out upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of prayer. And they shall look upon me, whom they have pierced. And they shall mourn over me as one mourneth for an only son, and they shall grieve for me, as the manner is to grieve for the death of the first-born."

This prophecy was fulfilled in regard to the Jews who were converted on Calvary and on the day of Pentecost. "All the multitude," says St. Luke . . . returned from Calvary striking their breasts." Again, at the preaching of St. Peter they reflected on the deicide they were guilty of, and did penance. Why will not meditation on the Passion have the same effect on you? You are no less guilty than they. You have crucified Jesus Christ anew by your sins. Let your

occupation be, then, to beg for mercy at the feet of the Crucifix. Let your place be before the Cross with Mary, the sinner, with Mary, the penitent, in order that, stained with the Blood of the Redemption, you may be cured of the wound of sin.

II

1. But this holy exercise not only withdraws us from sin, it, moreover, leads us to the practice of virtue. And this it does as well by the sublime example given us by our Saviour in the Passion, as from the grace and efficacy following from such an occupation. As to the example, it is the highest put before us even in the life of Jesus Christ. All virtue culminates in the Passion and death of the Saviour, and as to the grace and efficacy, they correspond to the closeness to which we approach that which is the source of all supernatural grace—the Passion. This is why the Saviour, speaking of His death, says: "When I shall be lifted up, I shall draw all things to Myself."

Yes, Lord, we may cry out with St. Leo, "You have drawn all things to Yourself by Your death. You have drawn Jew and Gentile, Greek and barbarian, the learned and the simple. You have drawn by Your Cross the nations to the knowledge of the Gospel, and the hearts of men to the love of virtue. You have drawn all things to Yourself. It is from the height of the Cross, as from a pulpit, that You exhort us all to become saints, and we learn in contemplating

You there, all that we have to do in order to become saints. We there learn to despise the things of the world; for if they deserved to be loved, the Son of God, who was made Man for our sake, would, without doubt, have loved them. We there learn not to fear affronts, persecutions, or death itself; for, if all these things were hurtful to man, the Son of God, who was made Man for love of us, would not have suffered them. In a word, there is no virtue which the Cross of Christ does not preach to us."

Where is the poor, the sick, or the afflicted man who will dare to complain if he compares his evils to those which the Saviour has suffered? He will see that, although he may have suffered much, he has still a long way to go before he arrives at sufferings like those of Jesus Christ. Where are the whips, the spittle, the vinegar, the gall, the crown of thorns, the outrages, the nails, the Cross? Where is the Christian who thinks of all this and who does not find himself still far removed from His Divine Model? Every other sorrow would disappear in the presence of the Cross, if men had this object as present in their mind as they ought to have.

But the evil of it is that scarcely anyone reflects on it. "With desolation is the whole land made desolate, because there is no one who thinketh in the heart." Is it not the greatest ingratitude, the forgetfulness in which we live of all that Jesus Christ has suffered for us? O brethren, it was for us that He was crucified, and in the midst of the agonies of death He was occupied only with the thought of our good. And, yet,

who thinks of this? Who occupies himself with this thought, and who makes of it the subject of his meditations? "Behold, the Just One dies, and there is no one who thinketh in his heart."

2. My brethren, let us not carry our ingratitude so far. Rather, let us reflect unceasingly on God crucified for the love of us.

This is the exhortation to us of the prince of the Apostles. In the fourth chapter of his First Epistle he says: "Christ, therefore, having suffered in the flesh, be you also armed with the same thought." (1 Pet. iv, 1.) Yes, be you armed with this thought at all times and in all conjunctures: at work and in repose; at rising up and retiring; at walking on your way and remaining in your homes. Make of it a weapon of offense and defense in the spiritual warfare. Never lose sight of the sufferings of Jesus Christ. Oh, happy, thrice happy, those who, living in the faith of the Son of God, occupy themselves continually with this thought: "I live in the faith of Jesus Christ, who loved me and who delivered Himself to death for me." But if the distractions and necessities of life permit you not to employ all the time that you would desire in this holy exercise, spend at least a short time each day in it, if only by recounting the sorrowful mysteries of the Rosary. If you do so, I dare assure you that this short time, being well employed, will suffice to make you faithful associates of the Passion of the Saviour and to merit for you the grace of being one day associates of His glory.

THE SORROWS OF MARY

"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, His Mother, and His Mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen. When Jesus, therefore, had seen His Mother and the disciple standing whom He loved, He saith to His Mother: Woman, behold thy son. After that, He saith to the disciple: Behold thy Mother. And from that hour the disciple took her to his own." (*John xix, 24.*)

I

1. It was a beautiful thought of the Church to institute a feast to commemorate the Sorrows of Mary, and to assign to that feast a place in the calendar immediately before Holy Week, the great week which is wholly given over to the contemplation of the sufferings of our Lord, Jesus Christ. For what more appropriate than that the sufferings of the Mother should be associated in the prayers and ceremonies of the Church with those of her Divine Son, since actually and before God they are inseparable?

I shall be in keeping with the spirit of the Church, therefore, in inviting you at this season to the contemplation of those sorrows.

First of all, I will ask you to consider their cause and meaning: for they are not the mere sorrows of

an earthly mother grieving over the death of an only child. Rather, they were ordained by God from all eternity as part of the penalty to be paid for sin, and were to mingle with the sufferings of her Son in that great tragedy which was to redeem the world.

The above-quoted passage from the Gospel, referring to the part taken by Mary on Calvary, says, that "beneath the cross of Jesus stood Mary, His Mother." Would it not occur to one, in reading that passage of the Gospel, that the posture described is not the one usually associated with a mourner who is affected with merely human grief? On the contrary, were Mary affected with merely human grief, her conduct would be somewhat like that of Agar, of whom it is said that, seeing her son dying of thirst in the desert, "she sat over against him a great way off . . . and lifted up her voice and wept." (Gen. xxi, 16.) She would, I say, have manifested her grief, as mothers usually do, by lamentation, fainting, and tears. But Mary, though her soul was filled with grief, stood apparently immovable beneath the Cross.

She stood by the Cross silent; outwardly impassive, as fulfilling a part assigned her by Providence in that great mystery. For she alone knew what was really taking place. "To others," says Bellord, in his *Meditations on Christian Dogma*, "the crucifixion was variously either the execution of a disturber of the peace, or the martyrdom of a holy prophet, the triumph of wickedness in high places, or the natural failing of a noble enterprise. Mary alone recognized that the Sufferer was God, and that this was the ac-

complishment of the divine plan for the redemption of mankind."

Mary had, as I have said, an important office to fulfill on Calvary. She was there to complete the offering of her Son, which she had commenced on the day of His Presentation in the Temple. "She presented Him in sacrifice to the Father, as her God and the Son of Man; as her offering, and the offering of humanity for the Redemption of the world." "Mary so loved the world as to give for our Redemption her only Son." (St. Bonaventure.)

As, moreover, through deficiency of faith and knowledge, no other person present was able to partake *consciously* in the act of sacrifice there offered, it was the duty of the Blessed Virgin to represent the whole of mankind and to offer those acts of adoration, faith, hatred of sin, love, and supplication, which were due from the participators in the Sacrifice.

At the same time she had to offer the greatest intensity of merely human suffering, in union with the divine-human Passion of her Son; and thereby she sanctified all our afflictions and united them with those of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

2. Furthermore, the Crucifixion was not only the "Sacrifice for sin"; it was also the new birth of mankind to the spiritual life, frustrated by the sin of Adam, and deferred to the day of Calvary. It was the great vital act that completed the work of God in the world. Mary was necessarily present and bore a share in it. This was part of her life-work. The Nativity and the Crucifixion were as one action. The

Sacrifice of the Cross began at Bethlehem. The new birth of mankind was completed on Calvary. Mary was concerned in both, and on each occasion she was present as Mother of the human race.

This our Lord declared in His word to St. John from the cross: "Behold thy Mother." This word of the dying Saviour had a spiritual signification and concerned us all. The Blessed Virgin was declared to be the spiritual "Mother of all the living," and on this occasion she bore her share of the penalty allotted to woman: "In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children."

II

But, have we any conception of the depth of those mysterious sorrows that filled the heart of our Blessed Mother as she begot us to the spiritual life, when standing by the Cross on Calvary? Oh, picture them, you earthly mothers, who have ever experienced a mother's sorrow. Picture them, all you who have ever wept by the deathbed of a fond parent or a tender child.

In the great drama of human history, examples are found of those to whom Divine Providence apportioned sorrows and trials greater by far than those usually allotted to mortals. Such were those mothers spoken of in the Old Testament whose afflictions are commemorated in the Office of the feast of the "Compassion of the Blessed Virgin." But what one of those afflicted mothers had sorrows to be compared to those

borne by the Blessed Virgin during the hours of the Passion? And this is what is intimated to us by the words of the prophet applied to our Blessed Lady in the Office spoken of: "O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be sorrow like unto my sorrow."

Agar, we know, was afflicted at the sight of her son Ishmael perishing of thirst in the desert; "and seeing him die," says Scripture, "she cast him under a tree, and went her way, and sat over against him a great way off; for she said: 'I will not see the boy die' . . . and she lifted up her voice and wept." Mary, on the contrary, in fulfillment of her double office of co-redemptrix of mankind, and "Mother of all the living," had to accompany her Divine Son through all the stages of His Passion from Gethsemani to Calvary, and see Him die in thirst and agony on the Cross.

The mother of Tobias goes every morning to the hilltop to scan the horizon for the sight of the return of her lost son, and she cries and weeps: "Wo, wo is me, my son; why did we send thee to go to a strange country, the light of our eyes and the staff of our old age: the comfort of our life, and the hope of our posterity?" But the son of so much love, conducted by an angel, will return to the embrace of his mother; whereas Mary is only permitted to receive into her lap the corpse of her Beloved, and kiss the bloody marks of the wounds of His thorn-crowned brow.

Noemi returns desolate from the land of Moab, where she buried her husband and two strong sons;

and she weeps and says: "Call me no more Noemi, that is, beautiful; but call me Mara; that is, bitter; for the Almighty hath quite filled me with bitterness. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me back empty." More desolate was Mary, as she returned from the sepulchre, where she had laid her Son and her all.

Respha, the wife of Saul, saw her two sons "crucified upon the hill before the Lord"; "and she took haircloth, and spread it under her upon the rock from the beginning of the harvest to the rainy season, and she suffered not the birds to tear them by day, or the beasts by night." Mary has to see the inmost soul of her Jesus torn in His agony of Gethsemani by the wild beasts of hell. She will witness on the morrow the "comeliest of the sons of men," lacerated with whips and scourges till there be not a sound spot in Him.

The heroic mother of the Macchabees dies seven times over in the martyrdom of her seven brave sons, slain before her face. The lance and the nails crash one by one through the tender heart of the Virgin Mary, as she sees the executioners nail her Jesus on the Cross and sees His sacred side opened by the soldier's spear; for, as St. Bernard says: "only by passing through her soul could they touch the body of her Son."

"A voice in Rama was heard," at the martyrdom of the holy Innocents, "lamentations and great mourning. Rachel bewails her children and would not be comforted." Mary laments over the Child of

her love tottering under the Cross on the way to Calvary, harried by soldiers more ruthless than those by whom the babes were done to death. Oh, well can the Virgin Mother on Calvary say with Sephora, the afflicted wife of Moses: "A spouse of blood art Thou to me," my Son; for Thou hast associated me entirely in Thy sufferings, by which Thou redeemest the world; and in me is fulfilled the prophecy of God to Eve: In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children, for only by sacrificing Thee, my First-born, do I become the spiritual mother of all mankind.

May we remember always the sorrows of Mary on Calvary, through which she begot us to God, and became the co-redemptrix of our race; and may this remembrance fill us with love and gratitude to her, and be the groundwork of our trust in that powerful protection she exercises in our behalf in Heaven, where she pleads with her Divine Son for the salvation of us all.

THE PALM SUNDAY SOLEMNITIES

I

1. As we take part yearly in the ceremonies of Holy Week, I wish to impart to you, dearly beloved, some information concerning the mysteries which these ceremonies commemorate. This information will enable you to assist at them with a more enlightened and chastened piety.

This week is called, in the language of the Church, "The Great Week," and "Holy Week." It is called "The Great Week," because of the great events it commemorates, and "Holy Week," because in it was enacted the tragedy through which was accomplished the Redemption of the world.

When our Lord was making His last journey to Jerusalem with His disciples, He said to them: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished that were written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man. For He shall be betrayed, and spit upon, and mocked, and scourged; and after they have scourged Him, they will put Him to death." And then, lest they should be scandalized, He added: "And on the third day He shall rise again." It is not without significance that this Gospel is read on Quinquagesima Sunday, the Sunday before the open-

ing day of Lent. For one of the purposes for which the Lenten season was instituted was to enable us to prepare ourselves by prayer and penance for the worthy commemoration of our Lord's Sacred Passion. Hence, this purpose is pointed out repeatedly in the sacred liturgy during the holy season, and our minds are lifted to the contemplation of the great events that culminated in His Crucifixion and death on Calvary.

2. And now as to the opening ceremony of Holy Week, the solemn procession of Palm Sunday, it commemorates the triumphal entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem a few days before His Passion. It was only a few days after our Lord's Baptism in the Jordan that St. John the Baptist, seeing Him pass by, cried out: "Behold the Lamb of God; behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world." Those whom the Baptist addressed were Jews who fully understood the allusion of the prophet. And it told as plainly as words could say that he pointed to the Messias, to the "Expected of nations," whose appearance all mankind looked forward to from the beginning of the world. It called to mind likewise the Paschal lamb, the yearly sacrifice of which commemorated the delivery of their forefathers from the slavery of Egypt.

It is told in the Sacred Books how Moses was commanded by God to go to Pharao and demand the liberation of His people. Pharao and all the Egyptians were obstinate and would not let the Israelites go, and God in punishment for their disobedience brought

upon them one after another the ten plagues that devastated their country.

At length the Almighty, being grieved at their obstinacy, determined to exercise upon them a master stroke of His justice in the slaying of the first-born in every home throughout the land: and it was brought about in this way. By His order Moses commanded the people to select a lamb a year old on the tenth day of the month Nisan, the first month of the Jewish year; and on the fourteenth day of the month they were to slay it and with its blood sprinkle the lintels of the doors of every Jewish household. And the people were to eat the lamb spitted and baked together with bitter herbs and unleavened bread, and in the guise of those about to undertake a journey. On that night the Lord sent His destroying angel over all Egypt, and he entered every house the doors of which were not sprinkled with the blood of the lamb, and he slew the first-born therein, from the child of Pharao upon his throne, to the child of the peasant in his shieling, so that there was mourning and lamentation in every home.

The people were thoroughly alarmed, and in their terror they thrust out the Israelites, so that they were at liberty to go. This portentous event, the greatest in the history of their nation, God commanded to be commemorated not only by a weekly service in their synagogues, but also by the eight-day solemnity of the Passover as the first and greatest solemnity of their race and nation. The festival was

solemnized yearly by all the people throughout the thirteen hundred years of their history, down to the time of our Lord.

How great was that annual gathering of the Jews we may learn from the statement of Josephus, their historian, who tells us that on a certain occasion no less than a hundred and fifty-two thousand Paschal lambs were slain. The people knew that the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb had not only a historic, but also, and chiefly, a prophetic import, and that it prefigured the Redemption of mankind through the agency of the long-looked-for Messias.

II

1. The fullness of time is come. The seventy weeks of years foretold by Daniel the prophet are fulfilled, "when the Saint of Saints should be anointed, and the Christ should be slain." All the people are in expectation. The Victim is prepared and ready for the sacrifice.

Now it was customary with ancient peoples, with the Jews as with the pagans, when they were about to offer a victim to the divinity whom they worshipped, to have it dedicated with testimonies of joy. The animal was decked out in richest trappings and led in procession to the place of immolation.

Jesus has now reached the apex of His career. It was only a few days before that He accomplished the most striking miracle of His life in the raising of Lazarus from the dead. All Judea and Jerusalem

are moved. The people now expect that He is about to proclaim Himself King of the Jews, and to inaugurate that reign of glory that is to outrival in brilliancy the reign of Solomon, the golden age of Jewish greatness.

The Master is at Bethpage, only two or three miles from the holy city, to the east of the Mount of Olives. It is midday of the tenth day of the month Nisan, when Jesus, the true Paschal Lamb, is seen descending the slopes of Olivet, seated on an ass's colt, fulfilling the prophecy of the sacred books concerning the Messias. The people are elated as perhaps they never were before. In their enthusiasm many take off their garments and strew them in His path, and as with one accord they cut down branches of palms and olives and fig trees, and carry them aloft in triumph and proclaim, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!"

2. This is the festival we commemorate to-day, the festival of preparation of the Son of God as the Victim of atonement for our sins. It recalls the great day when Jesus, the Lamb of God, went forth by the will of His Father, and was solemnly dedicated as the Victim of atonement for the sins of the human race. The high priest at the solemn procession of to-day represents the Eternal High Priest, who is no other than Jesus Christ Himself, and who by His sacrifice is to accomplish the Redemption of the world.

And we also, who are co-sacrificers, join in the

procession carrying palms and olive branches in our hands, about to take part in the oblation. It is right and proper then that we take part in the great ceremony of the dedication of the Victim with a lively faith and with a knowledge of the mystery that is commemorated.

Let these be your dispositions as you join in the commemorative procession. And may God, who inspires the Church to make this yearly commemoration of the great mystery, animate us with sentiments of piety; fill us with faith and knowledge; so that we may give glory to Him, honor to His Church, and love and loyalty to Jesus Christ, the true Lamb of God, who cometh in His capacity of Messias to take away the sins of the world.

THE LAST SUPPER

1. It was the evening of the fourteenth day of the month Nisan. The fullness of time laid out in God's merciful designs toward mankind had come. The seventy weeks of years foretold by Daniel the prophet had been fulfilled, when, as he says, "Transgression should be finished upon the people and upon the holy city; when sin should have an end; and iniquity should be abolished; and everlasting justice should be brought about; and vision and prophecy should be fulfilled; and the Saint of Saints should be anointed; and the Christ should be slain; and the people that were to deny Him should no longer be His."

Everything had been prepared for the celebration of the great solemnity. The Jews in their hundreds of thousands—shall I say, in their millions—had assembled from every country of the known world, within and in the environs of Jerusalem. A hundred thousand Paschal lambs were slain and were being prepared for the great supper. First, they were disemboweled, cleaned, and spitted. Not a bone was permitted to be broken. Two rods piled and crossed laid open their interior, lively figure of the Crucified. And thus prepared they were roasted before the fire, and eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs by the whole people in their tribes and families.

In a word, the Passover, greatest of Jewish festivals, was being celebrated now for the last time as the legitimate worship of Jehovah. The priests had been assembled all day in the temple, and were engaged in the performance of the most magnificent ceremonial of their worship.

But it was a mere empty rite, from which the spirit of devotion had departed. The faith and piety of former times were no more, and the leaders of the people were little better than pagans.

The chief priests and scribes had already entered into a conspiracy to bring about the death of Jesus Christ, and had even completed a compact with the apostate disciple to apprehend Him and have Him taken away.

2. The last few days of His life were crowded ones for Jesus. He purged the temple of the buyers and sellers who had profaned it, and scourged them

out of the holy place. He openly taught in the sacred cloisters, and pronounced some of His most telling discourses. He denounced the Scribes and Pharisees in that most terrible of denunciations. He foretold the destruction of the city and its inhabitants, a terrible figure of the most terrible calamity that should overtake the world before the General Judgment. He told them that, in punishment for their crime of the murder of the Man-God, they would no longer be His people. He cursed the barren fig tree, figure of unprofitable souls. He pronounced some of His most striking parables.

And now the hour of the delivery has come. He ordered two of His disciples to prepare the Pasch to be celebrated in the Upper Chamber, as described in the Gospels. The Paschal lamb was slain and eaten. The history of its institution was rehearsed by Him as president of the feast. The prescribed hymns were chanted, the last words of the legitimate worship of Israel before it should be changed into the more spiritual and sublime worship of the New Law. And then He, "the High Priest of the good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation: neither by the blood of goats or of calves, but by His own Blood," inaugurated the new Sacrifice by which He was "to enter once for all into the holies, having obtained an Eternal Redemption." (Heb. ix, 11–12.)

So, taking the unleavened bread from off the supper table, "He gave thanks and broke and said: 'Take ye and eat; This is My Body which shall be delivered

for you; do this for the commemoration of Me.' In like manner also the chalice, after he had supped, saying: 'This Chalice is the New Testament in My Blood, the (central) mystery of faith, this do ye as often as you shall drink for the commemoration of Me. For as often as you shall eat this Bread, and drink this Chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord until He come." (1 Cor. xi, 24–26.) In this He acted in the capacity of the "High Priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech," and inaugurated the more perfect Sacrifice of the New Law. By it He placed Himself in the guise of the true Paschal Lamb, whose immolation should bring about the Redemption of mankind. For, as is argued by St. Paul: "If the blood of goats and oxen, and the ashes of an heifer, being sprinkled sanctify such as are defiled to the cleansing of the flesh; how much more shall the Blood of Christ, who by the Holy Ghost offered Himself unspotted unto God, cleanse our conscience from dead works to serve the living God? and, therefore, He is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of His death for the Redemption of those transgressions which were under the former Testament, they that are called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance." (Heb. ix, 13–15.)

But the Sacrifice of the Supper Chamber was not a complete sacrifice; for it looked forward to the Crucifixion for its completion and, hence, no sooner was it offered, and the hymn of thanksgiving chanted, but our Lord, with His disciples departed, no longer in the formal guise of High Priest, but of

Victim. He took His direction towards the Garden of Gethsemani, there and then to enter upon His Passion, which was to end in His Crucifixion and death upon Calvary.

That Sacrifice of the New Law which was inaugurated in the Supper Chamber, and accomplished upon the Cross, is still perpetuated in the Mass, and will be, to the end of time. It is it that we commemmorate this Holy Thursday morning, and it is commemorated throughout the Church with all the solemnity and grandeur of detail that our poverty here below permits. Hence, those solemn ceremonies of to-day, which are among the most impressive in Christian worship. Hence, those lines of devout communicants who, with chastened minds and grateful hearts, approach the holy altar rails to receive Him who gave Himself to be the food and nourishment of our souls. Hence, the decorated altar of repose with its innumerable lights, before which multitudes of devout worshippers prostrate themselves in profound adoration. Hence, the peculiarly religious character of the time, which makes Holy Thursday one of the holiest of the holy days of the Christian year.

It is a day which impresses us with the nearness of God, and gives a new sense and meaning to the words of the Gospel: "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us"; and to the other great words recorded in the Apocalypse: "And I, John, saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem coming down out of Heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice from the

throne, saying: Behold the tabernacle of God with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself with them, shall be their God."

Enter into the spirit of those solemnities, dearly beloved. They are among the tenderest and sweetest of all those we are invited by the Church to take part in; among the most fruitful and advantageous to souls seeking union with God; among the grandest and the most elaborate the Church puts forth in the worship of her Divine Spouse.

I

Gethsemani

"O all ye that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow. . . . For the Lord hath made me desolate, wasted with sorrow all the day long. . . . Therefore do I weep, and my eyes run down with water, because the Comforter, the relief of my soul, is far from me. My children are desolate, because the enemy hath prevailed." (*Lam. i, 12–16.*)

1. In these mournful words, taken from the "Lamentations of Jeremias," does the Church pour forth her sorrow over the death of Jesus Christ. By such language does she relieve herself in the funeral office of the Tenebrae, which for the last three evenings you have heard chanted—applying to herself the desolateness and the widowhood which the prophet had spoken of concerning the city of his tears. And with reason may she weep and fill the earth with her lamentations in these days, when she is widowed, indeed, by the death of her beloved Spouse. And if Jerusalem is desolate and mourns over the loss of her children who are carried into captivity, how may not our Mother be oppressed with sorrow? For, behold,

her Lord is removed from her and she is desolate! Her "Holy of Holies" is violated, and nothing remains to her but the Cross, the funeral candles, and the winding sheet.

And we, O beloved brethren, if we be true children of the Church, should also weep and be filled with grief at the sight of the death of our beloved Lord. For was it not for our sake that He went through the ordeal of the Passion? And I know that it is this that has brought you together here to-night, that you may contemplate the sufferings of Jesus Christ and join the Church in weeping over the sorrows heaped upon Him on this day of awful, unheard-of crime.

Let us, then, review with sympathetic hearts the history of His most bitter Passion. Let us lay open the fountains of our affections, and be not ashamed to pour forth our tears before God. For this is as pleasing to Him in the New Law as it was in the Old, where He commanded that that man's name be blotted out of the Book of Life who joined not in the general mourning on the solemn Day of Expiation.

2. The evening is now advanced when Jesus Christ leaves the Supper Chamber with His disciples. He passes silently through the deserted streets of Jerusalem, and directs His steps towards a well-known quarter leading to the Mount of Olives. Calmly, deliberately, He enters the Garden of Gethsemani, which is situated on the side of the mountain that overlooks the city, taking with Him His favorite disciples, Peter, James, and John. As He advances,

He begins to feel His soul overcharged with a sorrow, which presses upon Him and weighs Him to the earth. Yet does He go before His disciples and pushes on alone into the midst of the garden, and there, stricken with sorrow, He prays, prostrate on the earth. O Christian soul, approach in spirit and contemplate your Saviour as, beaten flat upon the ground, He writhes in His agony; contemplate that soul, the delight of the blessed Trinity, now covered with humiliation and reproach, as it is engaged in deadly conflict with the powers of hell. Behold your Saviour offer His back to the stroke of His Father's justice, which we had earned for Him by our sins. Yes, O Lord, we are the culprits! We, not Thou, deserved to suffer! We provoked Thy Father's anger! But Thou wouldst take upon Thyself our sins, and bear the penalty of our transgressions. As the Eternal Father declares by the mouth of His Prophet: "For the sins of My people have I stricken Him."

Here it was that our Divine Lord united in His body and in His soul all that torments the most cruel, all that death the most sorrowful, all that man could suffer, the most painful. He delivered Himself to a paroxysm of fear and grief, capable of taking away His life, and His imagination pictured at once the most afflicting objects—the treason of a perfidious apostle; the desertion of His friends; the outrages, the cruelties, the atrocities of a ferocious mob; the ignominies, the insults of the most unjust tribunals, the most unworthy judges; the derisions, the reproaches, the barbarities, the impieties of the sol-

diers; the crying calumnies, the frightful injustices of the priests; the monstrous preference of all the people; the scourges, thorns, nails, Cross; all, all are present to Him in that awful hour; all are felt by Him; all press upon that tenderest of hearts and most loving of souls. Our Lord, about to succumb under so enormous a weight of anguish, cannot, will not dissemble. "My soul," He cries out, "is sorrowful even unto death!" What wonder is it that, under the pressure of so terrible a torture of mind and body, the most Precious Blood rushes out from His Divine Heart and is sent with violence through every pore of His Body and, gathering in great drops, drenches His garments and trickles to the ground on which He lies? What wonder if in His agony He cries to His Eternal Father: "My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me!" Oh, excess of love! excess of sorrow and agony of the soul!

3. The patriarch Jacob, when he beheld the many-colored tunic of his favorite son stained with blood, cried out in the anguish of his heart: "Woe is me! some evil beast hath devoured my son Joseph!" and rending his garments, he covered himself with sackcloth, saying: "I will go down in sorrow to the grave, because a wild beast hath eaten him."

O beloved brethren, look, look upon your Saviour prostrate in His agony. As yet no lash has torn His sacred flesh; no thorn has pierced His venerated brow; no lance has opened His sacred side, and yet, behold Him weltering in His blood. Look upon that seamless

garment clotted with gore, and say, some evil beast hath cruelly torn Him. That beast can be none other than the threefold cause of His bitter agony—the sins of men which bear down upon Him, loading Him with sorrow—the ingratitude of men, most of whom will not acknowledge His love or believe all that He has done for them—and the small fruit of His most bitter passion.

4. The Sins of Men—At that hour were accumulated all the iniquities, all the crimes that have degraded the human race from the first sin of Adam down to the last that shall have been committed; all, all in their manifold deformity were heaped upon the innocent soul of Jesus Christ. He who had been sinless, undefiled, born of the Immaculate Virgin, the all-pure, all-holy Son of God, now finds Himself charged with the accumulated sins of men. All the sins of paganism; all the sins of Christians; all the impurities of Sodom; all the blasphemies and curses given forth from the lips of impious men; all the injustices; all the murders; all the profanations of holy things; even the unspeakable sacrilege that was about to be accomplished whereby the Son of God is to be murdered by His own! Yes, even our sins were laid upon Him in that awful hour, each of which appeared individually in all its hideousness before the pure gaze of the Saviour. Oh, awful and terrifying thought! Even we were there, each with his quota of sins to hurl them on the prostrate form of the Son of God!

5. The Ingratitude of Men—One of the keenest pangs felt by a sympathetic heart is that which comes

from the ingratitude of those on whom it has bestowed many kindnesses; and this is the keener when the good turn has been effected at great personal inconvenience, and the person for whom it was done was the less deserving of the favor. This again was a source of immense anguish to the heart of Jesus, when He saw that men for whom He was about to bear such unheard of sufferings, would prove ungrateful—shall I say ungrateful?—would despise His love; would ally themselves with His fiercest enemies; would pursue Him and His with relentless hostility; would use the very good which He conferred to injure Him the more; and that even those who professed to be His friends and firm adherents would prove traitors of the blackest dye; would practise dissimulation and treachery, even when they would make it appear that they served Him best. This, my brethren, is what even good men cannot endure.

Shall we, shall we, I say, clear ourselves of this charge of ingratitude? We who profess, nay, glory in the name of Christians; we who daily enjoy the boon conferred upon us by the death of Christ; we who refuse to shed a tear or a drop of sweat for Him whose Body was suffused with a sweat of Blood for us?

6. The little fruit of His Passion—this, finally was a thing that caused infinite sorrow to the soul of Jesus in that death-agony of Gethsemani. We are all willing to bear labor and pain when we hope that our labor will be crowned with success, and that the reward will be proportionate to the care expended

in acquiring it. This it is which sweetens toil and makes us perform the hardest things cheerfully. But Jesus suffers ineffable torments, and yet He knows that after all His life of labor, and the shedding of His Blood, the greater part of the human race will be eternally damned.

All the Fathers of the Church unite in telling us that the sufferings which our Lord endured are incomprehensible, and that His Passion is a mystery of humiliation and sorrow which surpasses all created intelligence. "He suffered sorrow and confusion in a supreme degree," says St. Thomas. All is excess in the Passion of Jesus; excess of malice and ingratitude of the Jews, whom He had enriched with all kinds of favors; excess of cruelty in His murderers, who lay upon Him unheard of tortures; excess of humiliation in the outrages they inflict upon Him, and in the derision with which they charge Him; excess of sadness to which He delivers Himself, and which now causes the Blood to ooze out through all the pores of His body. "Know," says St. Thomas, "that the greatness of His sorrow was proportioned to the punishment which the sins of all men had merited; and this because the Saviour wished to destroy sin, not only by the force of His power, but also according to the measure of strict justice. Thus, He wished that there be a perfect equality between the debt and its payment, between sin and its punishment; in so much that His sufferings were so great as Man that they equalled, nay even surpassed, all the punishment that Divine Justice had a right to demand after the

remission of the eternal punishment of hell, which mortal sin had merited."

What, then, must have been the anguish that wrung the Heart of the Saviour, when, after such unheard of sufferings, He knew that by far the greater part of the human race would be not only damned, but would suffer a more terrible damnation through their own fault by reason of His most bitter Passion.

What wonder! what wonder, I say, that in that convulsive outburst of anguish the Divine Heart of Jesus should force out through every pore the sacred tide of His most Precious Blood? What wonder that the olive roots should drink of the crimson stream flowing from the Saviour, when He is about to shed it all so profusely, so prodigally, so recklessly, I should say, for wretched, ungrateful, ungenerous, hardhearted, ever sinful man?

1. But hark! What noise is that, as of a multitude coming through the olives? What lamps and torches are profaning the darkness of the night, the solitude of the place? What confused sounds are those uttered by that group of armed men, led by one who appears to be acquainted with the place, and who seems to be the leader of the band? Listen, he gives the word of order, "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is He; hold Him fast." O Judas! highly-favored disciple; dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss? Judas, raised to the dignity of a bishop, of an apostle! Judas, gifted with the power of working miracles! Judas, privileged to eat of the Flesh of the Man-God! Judas, has it come to this with thee, that thou dost betray thy Lord and Master to His mortal enemies? Judas, dost thou employ in thy act of treachery that sign which is the token of the closest intimacy, of the most endearing friendship? O God! what heart so insensible as not to be melted by so sweet, so loving a complaint? But Judas is implacable. O God! to what depths of degradation and hard-heartedness cannot man descend when mastered by even one overruling passion!

And now the whole multitude of that infuriated rabble close in upon Jesus with swords and clubs, as

if he were a robber whom they had come to apprehend. They seize Him; they collar Him; they beat Him; they drag Him along the ground; they kick Him while prostrate; they strike Him with their mailed fists—those cruel soldiers, and still more inhuman servants of the high priests. Oh, how much is the dignity of the Son of God wounded by their unworthy treatment! We behold that tender Body, the object of the adoration of the angels, bruised and livid from kicks and blows. Well mayest Thou, O Jesus, cry out in the language of the Prophet: "Many dogs have surrounded me. The council of the malignant have besieged me. They have opened their mouths against me like a lion ravening and roaring. My strength is dried up like a potsherd. My tongue hath cleaved to my jaws; and Thou hast brought me down into the dust of death."

2. It is now midnight, when Jesus, worn out with fatigue and violence, reaches the court of the high priest. Contemplate your Saviour in this new theater of His Passion. Hitherto He had been set at naught by a brutal rabble; but now He is to receive fresh insults from those who are placed in authority; and this is the more grievous injury, inasmuch as innocence is the more outraged by ill-treatment received from those who have a reputation for virtue, and who are naturally looked upon as the protectors of the injured, than from a wicked crowd, without order, head, or judgment, guided by passion alone.

Jesus is led before the Great Council of the Jews to be tried for a capital offense. "Like a lamb led to

the slaughter," He stands before His judge, opening not His mouth to reply to the calumnies they speak against Him. "And the chief priests and all the Council," says the Gospel narrative, "sought for evidence against Jesus, that they might put Him to death; and they found none. For many bore false witness against Him, and their evidence was not agreeing." Then the high priest, astonished at Christ's meekness and wishing to convict Him, asked Him: "Answerest Thou nothing to the charges that are made against Thee by these men?" "And He held His peace." And, again, the high priest said to Him: "I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us if thou be the Christ, the Son of God!" Jesus answered: "Thou hast said it; yes, I am." This was what that impious man desired. He wanted a pretext to condemn Him and bring Him to execution. Then the hypocrite, rending his garments, cried out: "What need have we of further witnesses?" "You have heard," he says to his associates, "You have heard the blasphemy. What think you? Who all condemned Him to be worthy of death?"

Then, indeed, is our Saviour subjected to new outrages. There was a court or hall in the palace of the high priest. Into the midst of this Jesus was led, to be delivered to the brutality of the servants and soldiers. Then did they spit in that Divine Face on which angels gaze in fear. Then "did they buffet Him and strike His cheek." Then did they blindfold Him and set Him at naught, striking Him with the palms of their hands, and saying: "Prophesy who it

was that struck Thee." Then did they pull His hair and beard, and bow the knee before Him in mockery. Thus was Jesus outraged all the night long. How truly did David prophesy of Him a thousand years before: "All they that saw me laughed me to scorn. They have spoken with the lips and wagged the head. But I am a worm, and no man, the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people." And Isaias, when he said: "I have given my body to the strikers, and my cheeks to them that plucked them. I have not turned away my face from them that rebuked me and spat upon me."

3. But it might be asked: Where was the faithful band of the Apostles who had accompanied Christ Jesus in His journeyings and preachings? Where the beloved John, who had reclined on the bosom of his Master in the Supper-Chamber only a few hours before? Where the ardent Peter, who declared that even if all the others were to abandon Him, he would die defending the person of his Master? Where James, "the brother of the Lord," or that other James who had ambitioned to sit at the right hand of Christ in Heaven? Where all the other disciples who followed the fortunes of their Master in the days of His prosperity?

Look at yonder fire blazing in the middle of the court. There is Peter sitting in the midst of the servants of the high priest. The fervor of the ardent disciple has cooled. The night is cold. He warms himself. He who boasted that even if he had to die with his Master, he would not deny Him, see him now

turn pale at the inquiry of a servant-maid, and curse and swear that he never knew Jesus!

Look in another quarter of the apartment, in a remote corner. There is the beloved John, grieving indeed at the outrages heaped upon his beloved Master, but weakly disguising himself for fear of the Jews. Where are the others? Dispersed in every quarter, scattered like sheep without a shepherd. At the moment when Jesus was apprehended in the garden, all dispersed; all saved themselves by flight, leaving their Master in the hands of His captors. Oh, how inconstant is the heart of man! Well, again did the Prophet declare of Him: "I looked for one that would comfort Me, and there was none; and for one that would grieve together with Me, and I found none."

JESUS BEFORE PILATE

I

1. And now the morning dawns. Straightway those aged conspirators, who had remained up late the night before, hold counsel together against Jesus. They are not wearied. They seek not the indulgence given to advanced age. They are bent upon business and they are in earnest.

Jesus, after a night of insults and derision, is led to the justice hall of Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor. The power over the life of citizens is taken away from the Great Council of the Jews. But the life of Jesus Christ they will have, even though by it they acknowledge the hated yoke of Rome. What is patriotism? What is dignity? What is the honor of their state and nation to men goaded on to fury by jealousy and implacable hatred? Blood, His Blood they will have. And even though the walls of their city and temple should fall upon them, they still persevere in their attempt.

To the hall of Pilate, therefore, they lead Jesus, bound like a malefactor. And here new torments await Him. Being come to the tribunal of Pontius Pilate, He is put upon His trial as if He were a culprit. Oh, what a new indignity to the holy Lamb of

God! The Innocent tried by the guilty! The Judge of the living and the dead questioned by one of His own creatures! And on what a charge? By what accusers? On what testimony? Because He went about doing good to all. Because He dared to assert who He was and call Himself the Son of God. And who were those righteous men who are so zealous for the majesty of God? Hypocritical Pharisees, corruptors of the Divine Word, and still more iniquitous priests and doctors of the law. And these are the men who now rise up for the law and accuse the Son of God of being its violator.

And on what testimony? On that of false witnesses, of men bribed to swear away His life, of perjurers, the vilest scum of that great and sinful city; bribed for their perjury by the very men whose duty it was as the preservers of public morality and as guardians of the law, to visit with the severest punishments those guilty of calling God to witness to a lie. By the sentence of such a judge; at the instigation of such accusers; on the testimony of such witnesses, Jesus is condemned to death.

2. How does He demean Himself before such a tribunal of violated justice? "Like a lamb led to the slaughter," He opened not His mouth in self-defense. And when the judge, after examining the case, says: "I find no cause in Him," then does the storm of passion burst from His accusers. "Unless He were a malefactor, we would not have brought Him before you!" "Away with Him!" "Crucify Him!" "Punish Him as a slave! for we, the representatives of His

race and nation, disown Him as one unworthy of society with us." "If the sentence be unjust, then let His blood come upon us and upon our children!" And when the judge would still try to save Him by putting Him on a par with the murderer, Barabbas, saying: "Whom will you that I release to you, Barabbas, or Jesus, that is called Christ?" the multitude, instigated by the chief priests and ancients, cry out: "Release to us Barabbas; but this man, let Him be crucified!"

From the tribunal of Pilate, Jesus is led to that of Herod. Again is He dragged through the streets of Jerusalem amidst the execrations of the populace. Then again did the streets of the city resound with blasphemies, those streets that but a few days before rang with the hosannas of His praise. Herod was glad to have an opportunity of seeing Him, for he had heard many reports about His power of working miracles, and he was desirous of feasting his curiosity by having some wonders worked in his presence. And when Jesus was unwilling to satisfy him, he, together with his courtiers, set Him at naught, putting on Him a faded rag and saluting Him as a mock king and as a fool to be held of no account.

II

From the court of Herod, Jesus is led back again to that of Pilate, who, as the Gospel says, "scourged Him." What manner of scourging that was, we learn from the tradition of the Church, from revelations

made to chosen souls, and from the words of the Gospels. The punishment of scourging, like that of crucifixion, was imposed only on slaves. By the Roman laws no lash should ever violate the back of a Roman citizen. Our Lord, being a native of Judea, enjoyed the privilege of citizenship granted by Rome to the subject states. Therefore, by right no lash could ever touch His flesh. And even with slaves, a limit was put to the cruelty of their masters by a law forbidding more than forty strokes.

What do we behold? In the palace of the Roman Governor there was a cohort of soldiers, the roughest, the most disorderly, the most corrupt of pagan Rome. To these savages is Jesus delivered to be scourged. Close on six thousand lashes do they lay upon Him, those stalwart, brawny men! O brethren, contemplate your Saviour in the court of Pilate, tied with ropes and bands to a pillar, as if He were a dangerous madman! Behold His tender Body writhing under the terrible blows dealt Him by those leaded whips, wielded by strong men, with hearts more unfeeling than the marble column to which He is bound! Behold His Blood spurting from His wounds, torn, gaping, lacerated, from their blows! Contemplate that beautiful figure, "the comeliest among the sons of men," now reduced to one purple mass of gore and lacerated flesh! See His bones, His ribs, His joints, carved to a skeleton of the flesh that once clothed them! See the whips sodden with His flesh! Behold Him weltering in the pool of His most Precious Blood, and cry out with the prophet:

"Truly, He has borne our iniquities, and carried our sorrows! He was wounded for our iniquities! He was bruised for our sins!"

III

Nor is this all. Christ's suffering has not yet reached its height. His Body is indeed one bleeding wound "from the crown of His head to the sole of His foot." But, yet, it is exterior. Pain is felt only through the medium of the nerves, which in time perhaps become paralyzed through violence of agony. No, pain must be brought to bear upon the seat of sensation itself. The very skull, nay, the brain itself must be assailed. What then does the cruelty of men devise against their God? Instigated, made ingenious by the devil himself, his persecutors discover a new mode of torment, as yet unknown to tyrants, and one which, like the Cross, will become, to the end of time, the ensign of the followers of Christ.

These inhuman barbarians, in the revelry of their cruelty, plat a crown of thorns, strong, sharp, and long, and press it on the sacred brow of our Lord; press it, I say, not with their naked hands, for, they fear to get pricked by its sharp spines; but with instruments—with their shields and mailed gauntlets; press it, I say, till the thorns pierce the skin and are buried in the flesh; press it till they pierce through the flesh and are fastened in the skull; press it till the Blood gushes out, and He is blinded with its flow, and He is maddened from the pain! Oh, unheard of

cruelty! O dear Lord, what do they do to Thee? With Thy eyes blinded by Thy own Blood; with Thy hair and beard one clotted mass of gore; with Thy ears and neck besmeared; with Thy sacred temples pierced by the thorns of Thy mock crown; with Thy mangled body covered with a purple garment, derisive sign of mock royalty; sitting upon the throne of Thy humiliation, they bow the knee before Thee as the King of their diversion. They serve Thee with cuffs and spittle, striking the thorns of Thy crown home into Thy skull with Thy scepter of a reed! O Jesus, permit us to make some reparation to Thee to-night by our tears and sorrow, by our compassion, and by our resolution no more to join league with sin, Thy enemy.

CALVARY

I

Let us hasten on to that crowning point of humiliation, and outrage, and prodigal love. Jesus is now weary to death with several hours of the most worrying torment of body and mind. His soul, laden with sorrow and anguish; His body, a weltering mass of wounds and gore; all His members relaxed from a sleepless night and loss of Blood; His dignity wounded by insults, vile usage, and shameful exposure; His honor wounded by derision and the insolence of His tormentors. And, now, they lay upon that wounded back, the Cross—a huge, rough, heavy beam of timber. "Jesus went, therefore," says the Gospel narrative, "carrying His own Cross." For the fifth time He is led through the streets of Jerusalem amid the derision of the populace.

We are told by those whose piety led them to inquire about the Passion of our Saviour that the distance from the hall of Pilate to the summit of Calvary is over half a mile. For such a distance, then, did the exhausted frame of our Lord bear along the burden of His Cross. It might be asked: How had the Saviour strength to carry that awkward beam. The Fathers of the Church unite in telling us that this

was done only by a miracle of endurance. And this the Psalmist had foretold of Him, when he said: "Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldst not; holocausts and sin-offerings do not please Thee; but a Body, specially fitted up for suffering Thou hast given Me. Then, said I, behold I am ready to do Thy will, O God." Yes, it was only by His Father's sustaining power that Jesus was enabled to undertake this fresh load of ignominy and suffering. And here all the fountains of affliction of that nature fitted for affliction are once again set in motion.

Three times, with a crash and a shock that shivered all His nerves, did the Saviour fall under His heavy load. Three times did the lash of the executioner awake Him from His swoon, to have His ears outraged anew by their blasphemies. Once, indeed, did He stand to speak. It was to the women of Jerusalem. His words, preserved to us in the history of the Passion, betray His compassionate, loving heart, and the divine nobility of His soul. "Daughters of Jerusalem," He said, "weep not over Me, for all this I suffer of My own free will and choice; but weep for yourselves and for those dear little ones that shall have to bear the burden of their fathers' crimes."

II

1. And now at last they reach the summit of Calvary. O dearest Jesus, now indeed is arrived the hour, long looked for with ardent expectation! Now

indeed shall be consummated Thy Baptism, so long desired, wherein Thou wilt be washed with the Blood and Water issuing from Thy sacred side.

Being come to Mount Calvary, they strip Him violently of His garments, which, sealed with the Sacred Blood, cause Him infinite pain, as the executioners drag together with them the torn flesh from His mangled Body. They throw him on the ground and dig His hands and feet through with rough, blunt, iron spikes, which, tearing through nerve and fiber, send a very paroxysm of anguish to His inmost soul. And now those rough, cruel soldiers raise the Cross aloft into the air. High between heaven and earth they lift it, bearing its precious burden, writhing in agony. And with an awful thud they plunge it deep into the earth, tearing open the wounds of His hands and feet. Oh, incredible depth of the wickedness of man! The Son of God had come to earth to crown us with favors from Heaven, and behold man has hung Him upon a tree of infamy! Be not surprised that the sun should refuse to give his light; or that the sea should lash its waves against the shore, desiring to swallow up the human race in vengeance for its outraged God. Be not surprised that the rocks should split in anguish at the hardheartedness of man.

2. And how do the authors of this unheard of outrage demean themselves? "Va! Thou that savest others, come now, let us see Thee save Thyself!" "Come down now from the Cross, on which we have laid Thee, and we will believe in Thee!" "Thou that

wouldst destroy the temple and in three days build it up again, save Thy own life now if Thou art able!" "Va! Thou that wouldst break the Sabbath, call upon Thy God, and He will save Thee, perhaps, from the death that we have brought Thee to!"

And what answer does the Son of God make to their derisions? What imprecations does He invoke upon His savage persecutors? What chastisements does He call upon His Father to inflict upon them? "Father," He says, "forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

III

1. For three hours, amid the darkness of the sun, and the anger of the sea, and the rending of the rocks, with His naked body extended and His gaping wounds exposed to the biting blasts of March, did the Lord of heaven and earth hang writhing on the Cross. For so long a time did the soldiers keep guard around the hill. For so long a time did His tormentors, like wolves, howl about in fury. Jesus was long silent on the Cross, His eyes closed in prayer, His head bent upon His chest, when on a sudden that manly voice breaks forth once more, a reminder of those days when He preached upon the hillsides. Listen to the startling words He utters: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" And here we come upon another chasm of suffering into which Jesus Christ was cast during the period of His Passion.

No matter how great the Sufferer's agony may be; no matter what torture of mind or body He has; yet, a soothing balm is poured upon His wounds by the care and sympathy of one beloved. Our Lord has suffered in His body all that nature, helped by miraculous aid from His Father, could endure. He has suffered in His soul what all the human race could not endure. All men seem to be His torturers. His friends who had supped together with Him; all, all have abandoned Him. He is stripped of every shred, naked as He came into the world. He is deprived of His reputation and honor. He is maligned; He is slandered. But now we learn something more, and that is, that not even His Eternal Father shows Him the favor of His countenance. No, that love which prompted Him to undertake the task of our Redemption induces Him to persevere to the end, alone and unsustained. Not even the consolation of sympathy does He receive from His Father. No, not even from His own divine nature. For by an extraordinary miracle His Soul is shut out from the bliss of the Beatific Vision, which, as Son of the Most High, He, by right, should enjoy, so that with truth He may say, as Isaias had foretold of Him: "I have trodden the winepress alone. I looked around and there was none to help; I sought and there was none to aid."

2. Yet was He entirely unsustained? Was there not even a ray of sympathy to cheer Him in that supreme hour of His dereliction? Was there no one found in Heaven above, or on earth beneath, to cast

a glance of compassion on the agonizing Saviour?

The Gospel takes care to note that even then there was one that followed Him through all the stages of His Passion; one heart that throbbed in unison with His, and that, as far as creature was capable, sympathized in every agonizing thrill. "Beneath the Cross," says the Gospel, "stood Mary, the Mother of Jesus." O Mother of Jesus, our Mother also! Coredemptrix of our race! the one sustaining sympathizer of the Saviour in His agony! Thou alone amongst creatures wert found worthy to wade with thy Son through the sea of His most bitter Passion! Thee alone did the Father consider worthy to share the honor of His triumph!

In every stage of the Passion was His Blessed Mother present; if not bodily, at least in sympathetic sorrow. In Gethsemani, during His sweat of Blood, she administered to Him the cup of consolation in His agony. In the hall of Caiphas she felt every bitter taunt inflicted on her Son. In the streets of Jerusalem every reproach uttered by the people pierced her heart as "a sword of sorrow." In Pilate's hall every lash, every blow, every thorn of His crown was to her a pang of keenest anguish. On the way to Calvary the load of the Cross pressed upon her shoulders. And now, during the three hours of His agony, she is still present, offering Him the balm of companionship in sorrow. O dearest Mother! permit us to offer to thee to-night the tribute of our gratitude for remembering us on Calvary. For then we were present to thee, each one in his necessities.

3. The third hour of the agony of Jesus on His Cross is nearing to its close. One by one the numbers of that multitude return to the city, wearied with taunting Him to death. The soldiers still keep guard around the hill, and darkness encompasses the earth. Suddenly the Saviour raises Himself upon His Cross, utters a loud and piercing cry: "It is consummated!" again bows His sacred head, and dies. That cry sent forth by the Saviour on the Cross resounds throughout the universe. It pierces through the depths of the abyss. It rings from end to end along the caverns of hell. By it the inmates of the infernal regions are put into confusion. Its princes, become insolent for the hour, are thrown back by it in rage and despair. It ascends beyond the clouds. It is borne as a trumpet blast into the ears of the Most High. And ere its echoes faint upon Judea's gale, the bolts of Heaven's gates are drawn. Its portals are thrown open wide. The shackles fall from off men's limbs. The human race is free. Redemption is accomplished.

Dearly beloved brethren, you have followed me with patience through this long and doleful narrative. I make no apology for my stay, for I know that the Passion of our Lord is to you, especially on this most solemn night, a subject on which you love to dwell. If the sufferings of your Saviour have awakened in your breast a pang of grief; if a tear has coursed your cheek, or a flush of indignation has mantled on your brow, remember that sin did it all.

Yes, our sins did it all. We it was that brought this accumulation of sorrow on our God. The Jews, the soldiers, Caiphas, Herod, Pilate—all were only our executioners. We have judged Him worthy of death. We have brought Him to His end. And if there was one soul, the least amongst us here to-night, unredeemed, against whom Heaven's gates were barred, most willingly would our loving Lord act the drama of His Passion once again; most gladly would He bear it all to save that soul from hell. Go to-night in silence to your homes and think on all that you have heard and seen. Think on what has brought Jesus to His death; and let each one ask himself the question, "Will I ever commit mortal sin again?"

THE THREE HOURS' AGONY

or

Reflections on the Seven Last Words of Our Saviour on the Cross

At twelve o'clock on Good Friday the pious participants enter on the service by the chant or recitation of the following hymn:

O Come and Mourn

O come and mourn with me awhile,
See, Mary calls us to her side;
O come and let us mourn with her,
Jesus, our Love, is crucified!

Have we no tears to shed for Him,
While soldiers scoff and Jews deride?
Ah! look how patiently He hangs;
Jesus, our Love, is crucified!

Seven times He spoke, seven words of love,
And all three hours His silence cried
For mercy on the souls of men;
Jesus, our Love, is crucified!

Come, take thy stand beneath the Cross,
And let the blood from out that side
Fall gently on thee drop by drop;—
Jesus, our Love, is crucified!

THE PROMISE OF OUR LORD

"I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of prayers. And they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced; and they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for an only son; and they shall grieve over Him as the manner is to grieve for the death of the first-born. . . . And they shall say to Him: What are these wounds in the midst of Thy hands? And He shall say: With these I was wounded in the house of them that loved Me." (*Zach. xii, 10 to xiii, 6.*)

THE FIRST WORD

"When they were come to the place which is called Calvary, they crucified Him there; and the robbers, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. And Jesus said: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (*Luke xxii, 33–34.*)

The sacred liturgy, the devotions, the whole spirit of the time, bring painfully before us in these days, and especially on this great day of the Passion, the sufferings and death of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Everything in the Church's service is designed to give expression to the details of the great tragedy. We are brought to contemplate one by one the scenes of the Passion—the Agony in the Garden; the Scourging; the Crowning with Thorns; the Carrying of the Cross; the Crucifixion and Death on Calvary. The sermons, the public prayers, the adoration of the Cross, all call us to the deep contempla-

tion of the humiliations and sufferings of the "Man of Sorrows."

But our contemplation of the scenes of the Passion, however sincere and earnest, will not enable us to touch the depths of the Saviour's generous love for us if the motives of His sufferings are not revealed to us, and if we do not learn something of the emotions stirred within Him during the period. And these we can come to an adequate knowledge of only through His own words expressed or wrung from Him in His sorrows.

It was Jesus himself who first gave utterance to the aphorism which has since won the assent of all; that "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." And if this is so, then, from the utterances given forth by Him on the Cross, we gather something of His generous abandonment of Himself to sacrifice for love of us, and the mental workings that love was the cause of during the Passion.

The purport and meaning of the words of our Saviour on the Cross I would try to expound for you if knowledge were given me, and the one remark that I will make concerning them is that in their entirety they show us the overpowering charity of our God towards us, inasmuch as they express an entire and unreserved sacrifice of Himself for us and a generous offer of pardon to all, even to His unrelenting enemies.

It was at the beginning of the three hours' agony. The Jews had spent their cruelty and malice against Him. He saw the deep hatred entertained for Him

by the chief actors in the tragedy. He felt the callous conduct of the soldiers, and their excessive cruelty towards Him. He knew the malice of the chief priests and the scribes, who urged on the multitude to greater violence against Him. He saw the cowardice and infidelity of the disciples, only one of whom dared to be present to cheer Him as He lay upon the Cross. He felt the malice of mankind, for we were all there; and that frenzied crowd were but the executioners of our malicious will. And it was amid such a scene that He lifted His eyes toward heaven and gave utterance to the sublime prayer for forgiveness of all: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Oh, sublime and touching prayer, meet to come from the heart and lips of a God dying for the salvation of His murderers! Magnanimous example to all mankind in the practice of heroic charity, stimulating the thought that if our God prayed thus and died for us whilst we were still sinners and His enemies, what will He not do for us now that we are His friends and His redeemed ones?

The prayer of the Saviour on the Cross is the same that has been breathed from the depth of His Godhead by the Word from all eternity. It is the prayer through the efficacy of which we are all saved. From the height of the Cross it reverberated throughout the universe and reached back even to the beginning of time. By anticipation it was the source of the salvation of all the just who lived from the days of Adam.

Oh, may the example of Jesus on the Cross be to us an incentive to the practice of this greatest of all the virtues. And may it teach us magnanimity of thought in favor of all men; that we may show ourselves worthy followers of our crucified Saviour and merit the crown of life.

O Jesus, grant us the grace to practise this most difficult, yet most meritorious of the Christian virtues, that so we may merit to live in love and charity forever with Thee. Amen.

O Heart of Mary, reflex of the infinitely charitable Heart of thy Son, Jesus Christ, obtain for us that the divine prayer of thy Son may have effect on our souls, and that we may receive pardon for all the injuries we have committed against Him by our sins. Amen.

Short reflection.

Prayer

O Lord Jesus Christ, crucified for us, humbly but with great confidence we beseech Thee to be merciful to all here gathered round Thy Cross, and to all those for whom we wish to pray, especially for (here mention your particular intention). Grant us the grace to know Thee, to love Thee, and to be truly sorry that till now we have known and loved Thee so little.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory, etc.

THE SECOND WORD

At that time, one of those robbers who were hanged spake blasphemy against Him, saying: If Thou be the Christ, save Thyself and us. But the other answered

and rebuked him, saying: Dost not even thou fear God, seeing that thou art in the same condemnation: And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus: Lord, remember me when Thou shalt enter into Thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him: Amen, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise. (*Luke xxiii, 39–43.*)

The Saviour's prayer on the Cross was not a mere vague petition for pardon for mankind in general. It extended to each individual of that throng and brought light and grace to each according to the disposition of his heart. The efficacy of that prayer we see from the effects that followed.

When standing by the open grave of Lazarus, Jesus groaned in spirit and, lifting His eyes to Heaven, said: "Father, I give Thee thanks that Thou hast heard Me. And I know that Thou hearest Me always." And now in response to His prayer for the pardon of His enemies we see the firstfruits in the conduct of the penitent thief. This criminal was one of those who jeered at Him only a few minutes before, in company with the others. But his heart was softened and humbled by his sufferings and we know that the heart that is humble is near to its conversion. Hence, for him the grace of repentance fresh come from Heaven in response to the Saviour's prayer. This is why we see him, who but a little while before joined with the others in blaspheming the Saviour, now penitent; and addressing Jesus in humble petition, he cried out: "Lord, remember me when

Thou shalt come into Thy Kingdom." And our Saviour answered him instantly and vouchsafed him a pardon infinitely more generous than he could have hoped for. All he dared to petition for was a bare remembrance; and behold, not only a remembrance did the Saviour give him, but He gave him the assurance that on that very day he would be with Him in Paradise. Oh, touching example of love and mercy of our Saviour to the penitent sinner, towards all those who approach Him to ask Him for pardon for their past sins.

Nor was this striking conversion of the penitent thief the solitary response to the prayer of Jesus on the Cross. On the contrary, a couple of hours afterwards we find whole multitudes, and among them many of the leaders among His persecutors, led to penitence. For the Gospel tells us that numbers of those who stood around the Cross and saw Him die, joined with the centurion in crying out: "This was indeed the Son of God," and "returned to Jerusalem striking their breasts."

Nor was even this all. Those wondrous conversions that took place on Calvary were only the beginning of the conversions of sinners effected as the result of that prayer of Jesus on the Cross, and among them our own. Yes, all the conversions of sinners to the end of time are to be regarded as the fruits of that divine prayer; all the calls to salvation; all the lights and graces conferred upon the just; and all the glory of the blessed; for we were all sinners and rebels against the Divine Majesty, till received and par-

doned through the prayer and voluntary sacrifice of Jesus, our Redeemer, on the Cross.

And even as the creative words first spoken by God, "Let light be made," were the cause of all light, intelligence, and knowledge in the world; and even as the other creative words addressed to our First Parents in Paradise, "Increase and multiply," have filled the earth with their descendants; and even as those other words spoken in the Supper Chamber, "This is My Body. This is My Blood; do this for a commemoration of Me," have perpetuated His presence among us sacramentally for all time; so, the divine words of pardon pronounced by Him on the Cross, "Father, forgive them," have been the cause and source of all forgiveness to men down to our day, and will be to the end of time.

O Jesus, merciful and pitying Lord, we confess that we also have been among the number of Thy enemies. We have daringly and repeatedly transgressed Thy holy commandments. We repent with our whole heart over our past transgressions, which had merited for us the eternal chastisements of hell. Henceforth we promise to love and serve Thee always.

Deign, O merciful Saviour, to remember us in Thy Paradise of peace. Forgive us in Thy love and mercy, and grant that we may be numbered among Thy pardoned ones, who are destined to live with Thee forever.

Short reflection.

Prayer (Page 189).

O Lord Jesus Christ, etc. Our Father, etc.

THE THIRD WORD

Now there were standing by the cross of Jesus, His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen. When therefore, Jesus saw His mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He saith unto His mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then He saith unto the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour the disciple took her to his own. (*John xix, 25–27.*)

The third word of Jesus on the Cross does but confirm and amplify our knowledge of His infinite love for us and for all mankind. By His prayer for His tormentors the Saviour gave to the world the sublimest example of charity, and with insistence urged the precept which He Himself gave, on all those who receive injury from others. In the repentance of the good thief and his reception of pardon, we witness the first results of the efficacy of that prayer—an efficacy which is further shown by the conversion of multitudes at His death. These are but the beginnings of a conversion which is offered to all. And now to give stability to their conversion and to crown their penance by perseverance, He entrusts the whole human race to the keeping of His Mother.

This Blessed Mother had stood by Him in His Passion when all others failed Him. She consoled Him in His agony in the Garden, and was His sole comfort when His Father "laid upon Him the in-

iquities of us all." She was present by her sympathy at the scourging and the crowning with thorns, and on the dolorous way to Calvary. And now, as the Gospel takes care to emphasize, "There stood by the Cross of Jesus His Mother." Yes, she stood and fainted not, this "strong woman" of the Scriptures. She went down with Him to the depths of suffering. She waded with Him through the sea of His most bitter Passion, and thus earned for herself the quality and title of "Queen of Martyrs," and Co-Redemptrix of our race." And now to confer stability on our conversion and to obtain for us final perseverance through the efficacy of her mediation with Him, He endowed her with the quality of "Mother of All the Living," which the first woman had lost by her sin.

"Behold thy son!" He said to her, standing by the foot of the Cross; and to St. John, "Behold thy mother!" John on the occasion personified the whole human race; and Mary at that instant took on herself the motherhood of us all. To each one of us she became a mother. And even as at the Annunciation she gave her assent to the Divine Maternity, saying: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to Thy word," so now in travail and sorrow at the foot of the Cross she is made the second Eve, "the Mother of all the living." And oh, at what a cost, and in the midst of what a sea of sorrows!

The Gospel continues: "And from that hour he [John] took her to his own." The beloved disciple provided her with a house, in place of the home of

Nazareth or Capharnaum, and for her Jesus he is given her as a son. He indeed received her with reverence and love, and, we may believe, was overwhelmed with gratitude at the thought of such a commission. But what an exchange on the part of the Divine Mother! "John," says St. Bernard, "is given for her Jesus; the son of Zebedee for the Son of God." What grief for the tender Mother, since the very thought of it affects us to tears, and tears open up our iron breasts! But this grief she joyfully bears and feels her tenderness for us increase at the thought of all the good she can do for us, and of the opportunities her new relation to us gives her to advance our interests with her Son.

Behold your Mother, then, beloved souls. In sorrow she begot you on Calvary. It was there that was fulfilled in her the prophecy of Scripture addressed to our first mother, Eve: "In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children." And by how much the greater was her sorrow, by so much the greater should be the love that we exhibit towards her, and by so much the greater should be the confidence we repose in her and the veneration we have for her.

O Mother of Jesus, Mother of our souls; deign to receive us as thy children. We have, indeed, many a time brought sorrow on thy maternal heart by our inconstancy and sins. But thou rememberest that we are only weak mortals. Deign now to receive our repentance and offer to thy Divine Son Jesus Christ, our regret and our sorrow. May we henceforth make

amends to Him by constancy and fidelity for all our past treachery and malice; and may we, through thee, obtain the grace of final perseverance. Amen.

HYMN

Rose of the Cross, thou Mystic Flower,
I lift my heart to thee;
In every melancholy hour,
Mary, remember me!

Let me but stand where thou hast stood,
Beside the crimson tree;
And by the Water and the Blood,
Mary, remember me!

There let me wash my sinful soul
And be from sin set free;
Drawn by thy love, by grace made whole,
Mary, remember me!

Rose of the Cross, thou thornless Flower,
May I thy follower be;
And when temptation wields its power,
Mary, remember me!

Prayer, O Lord (page 189).
Our Father, etc.

THE FOURTH WORD

Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying: Eli, Eli, lamma sabacthani, that is, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me! (*Matt. xxvii, 46.*)

This text brings us to the contemplation of the fourth word of Jesus on the Cross. That word is the cry of dereliction to His Father, which is expressed by the words: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me!"

The beloved disciple introduces the history of the Passion to us by saying: "Jesus having loved His own that were in the world, He loved them to the end." What is the signification of these mystic words? Do they mean that Jesus loved His own to the end of His life? This would not be an unusual love nor an extraordinary one on the part of our Blessed Saviour. For even worldly people ordinarily love their friends to the end of their life. No, they mean more, much more. The signification of the words is that Jesus loved His own as much as, and as far as, a God could love them; that is to say, in the words of Scripture, "He loved them with an everlasting love." This brought on Him the anger of His Father, for He carried in Himself "the iniquity of us all." By our sins we had earned the everlasting hatred of God. For, as the Scripture says, "To God, the sinner and his sins are hateful alike." Mortal sin is an offense of infinite malice against God. Therefore, it merits an infinite punishment at the hands of the Eternal Judge. Our Blessed Lord had volunteered to pay the entire penalty of our sins. "He suffered because he willed it." This made the Eternal Father inexorable in His punishment of Him. The thunderbolts of His anger surged around the devoted head of Christ.

Infinitely generous as Jesus was, still did His human nature cry out under the weight of His Father's fury. A little while before, in the garden of Gethsemani, the agony that seized Him at the sight of the sins of mankind in all their hideousness, so worked upon Him that human nature of itself could not bear them, and He cried out and said, "My soul is sorrowful even unto death!" And "O Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me." The chalice that He was compelled to drink was not made up of the indignities or sufferings inflicted upon Him by men. These the Saviour could bear with composure; for all men's efforts are puny when directed against God. But the weight of His Father's anger for sin, this it was that frightened Him. The clouds of that anger gathered around Him and darkened the light of day. The Eternal Father withdrew the light of His countenance from Him. Nay, by a marvel of generosity, the Saviour Himself allowed the light of the Beatific Vision, which, as the Eternal Son of God, He by right should enjoy, to be withdrawn from Him, and thus underwent the "pain of loss," that suffering which of itself is sufficient to constitute the torments of the damned. Hence, that piercing cry of anguish come out from the inmost depths of His Being, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

O dearly beloved, let that agonizing cry of our Saviour on the Cross bring home to you the great malice of sin. It was sin, the sins of mankind, and among them your sins, that pressed on the heart of Jesus on the Cross, and drew from Him that agoniz-

ing cry. It was your sin; for you were there, and your place was among the torturers of Jesus. With that frenzied crowd you called on your Saviour in mockery to come down from the Cross; for they were only our executioners. Pilate, Herod, Caiphas, Judas, the soldiers, the chief priests, they only carried out the sentence of death inflicted on the Saviour in punishment of our sins.

Nay, it was our sins that urged the Eternal Father "to lay on Him the iniquities of us all." For, as the Scripture says, "For the sins of My people have I stricken Him. . . . He bore our miseries, and He carried our sorrows. . . . He was wounded for our iniquities. He was bruised for our sins."

There is another thought that the agonizing cry of our Saviour calls to mind, and it is the awful punishment of the damned. We know that the chief torture of the reprobate souls is the pain of loss. Now, the pain of loss in the reprobate is none other than eternal separation from God, their Last End. And if the temporary abandonment of the Man-God by His Father that He might suffer the depths of punishment for sin called forth that agonizing cry which is so like a cry of despair, what must be the agony of the lost souls, when they realize that their separation from God is absolute and eternal?

O Jesus, infinite Victim for sin, grant that we may never be separated from Thee, our God. Grant, rather that, redeemed and pardoned through the efficacy of Thy sufferings and death, we may be received into Thy holy embrace, to share happiness and

love with Thee forever in Heaven. "O holy Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope: . . . turn thine eyes of mercy towards us, and grant that after this our exile in this vale of tears" we may be united to our God, and share eternal happiness with Him and thee in the Paradise of thy Son. Amen.

Short reflection.

Prayer, O Lord (page 189).

Our Father, etc.

THE FIFTH WORD

Afterwards, Jesus, knowing that all things were now finished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled said: I thirst. And immediately one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink. (*John xix, 28.*)

I

I have already remarked that in our meditation on the Passion we are chiefly affected by the exterior sufferings of our Lord—by those that come under the domain of the senses. We are affected, I say, at the contemplation of His dolorous sweat of Blood in the garden of Gethsemani, of His scourging, of His crowning with thorns, of the carrying of the Cross, of the Crucifixion. His interior sufferings we are made aware of only as they are made known to us by the words of our Lord Himself. This is to be remarked especially concerning the agony brought to our ob-

servation by the Fifth Word spoken by Jesus on the Cross: "I thirst."

Thirst, ordinarily looked upon as a minor suffering, can in reality be accounted among the greatest of agonies that a mortal can endure. This is so true that the classical poets, writing about Tantalus, King of Lydia, who was said to have committed some outrage against the immortal gods, represented him as subjected in hell to the torture of an implacable thirst, while by his chin flowed a stream of water which vanished when he tried to wet his parched lips.

And in fact those who witness thirst in others, as in the case of shipwreck, or of fever, or when passing over an inhospitable desert, tell us that the victim ordinarily becomes delirious from his sufferings and gets out of all control—a thing which those suffering from the most grievous fractures of limb or body do not, though their sufferings are extreme. And who does not know that when soldiers are found lying on the battlefield, their bodies torn to pieces by shot and shell, the one agony that seems to exceed all others is thirst—an agony which tortures them to death.

This agony of thirst seems in a peculiar way to affect those who suffer the penalty of death by crucifixion. The whole weight of the body suspended on the pierced hands and feet, opens wide the wounds of the nails, which at every moment pour out torrents of blood. Moreover, the violence of their agony which, increasing every moment, suffuses the body with a shower of sweat, in a short time dries up the whole frame. And the distorted position of the body stops

the free passage of the vital fluid in the arteries. These causes combined bring on an intolerable thirst, whose violence comprises within itself every other pain; and the withered veins and arteries shrunken like a dried sponge bring on a situation where the wretched victim calls out for death to put an end to his intolerable misery.

Jesus had now passed many hours of the most grievous torture. A sleepless night, added to the scourging, the crowning with thorns, and the crucifixion, had dried up His body in such sort that, by the seer who beheld Him in prophecy, He is represented as crying out: "My strength is dried up like a potsherd; My tongue hath cleaved to My jaws, and Thou hast brought Me down to the dust of death." "The most beautiful among the sons of men," He now puts on "a look hidden and despised," and "He is become as a worm, and no man."

This, with the outpouring of blood from His pierced hands and feet on the cross, exhausted His Sacred Heart. And in the effort of nature to refill His veins and arteries an implacable thirst comes upon Him, so that He is constrained to cry out in His agony: "I thirst"—a cry that opens up to us a new view of the sufferings of Jesus on the Cross, representing this thirst as one of His major sufferings.

II

But it was not physical thirst alone that affected the dying Saviour. The words have another and a far

more significant sense, namely, that that thirst has reference to the glory of His Father and to the salvation of souls.

All strong emotions of desire may be called a thirst; and in this sense the Saviour Himself pronounced a blessing on those who desire to attain a life of perfection, as in the Beatitude: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill." It was thus that the Saviour Himself had a thirst for His Father's glory and for the salvation of souls. And it was foretold of Him: "The zeal of Thy house, O Lord, hath eaten me up" —a prophecy which had reference to the chasing of the buyers and sellers out of the temple. He says again: "My meat," that is, "it is eating and drinking for Me to do the will of My Father who is in Heaven." And speaking of the Crucifixion in His eagerness for the salvation of souls, He says: "I have a baptism, wherewith I am to be baptized, and how am I not straightened," how do I not thirst with desire, "until it be accomplished."

Calvary is the culmination of the desires and virtues of the Saviour. In that last hour of His life He is pressed with a more ardent longing than heretofore to achieve the glory of His Father and the salvation of men, and this impels Him to give utterance to the wish: "I thirst." He, the Good Shepherd, saw the souls made to His own image and likeness, those princesses of the heavenly court, for whom He was about to die, on all sides in the grip of the infernal wolf. The beauty of their nature, enhanced by supernatural

grace, made them charming in His eyes, and He longed most ardently for their salvation. The spiritual evils to which He saw them exposed from the temptations of the devil and their own insane folly, only whetted the ardent longing He had to bring them into the fold and save them. This longing He cannot hide in His bosom, and therefore His ardent cry, which comes from the depths of His twofold nature: "I thirst."

I thirst for souls, and therefore it is that I am ready to undergo every penalty, to make every sacrifice, in order to procure their salvation and to bring them to their home in Heaven. I thirst to give glory to My Father, in obedience to whom I came into the world.

Dearly beloved, such was the love of Jesus Christ for His Father's glory and for our salvation. Are we affected with the same love? And what do we do for the glory of God and the salvation of souls? Do we thirst for God's glory, for the salvation of souls, and what do we do for their advancement in virtue? Oh, think of all those who are near and dear to us, of that great throng of the faithful who are bound to us by the ties of holy charity, who are members of the same Church and who labor for the same end as we. Strive then to help them to achieve their best good by praying that they be eternally united to God. Pray especially for your own near relatives, and for those to whom you are bound by the ties of justice and gratitude. How many perhaps you have scandalized in the past, who, as the result of your bad example, are now

in danger of hell. Pray that this blessed day of the Redemption may be for them, as well as for you, a day of pardon and repentance, that so you and they may share the delights of salvation in the house of the Lord, your God.

Prayer for the conversion of souls.

HYMN

By the Blood that flowed from Thee
In Thy bitter agony,
By the scourge so meekly borne,
By Thy purple robe of scorn.

Chorus

Jesus, Saviour, hear our cry,
Thou wert suffering once as we.
Hear the loving litany,
We, Thy children, sing to Thee.

By the thorns that crowned Thy head,
By Thy scepter of a reed,
By Thy footsteps, faint and slow,
Weighed beneath Thy Cross of woe.
Jesus, Saviour, etc.

By the nails and pointed spear,
By the people's cruel jeer,
By Thy dying prayer which rose,
Begging mercy for Thy foes.
Jesus, Saviour, etc.

By the darkness thick as night,
Blotting out the sun from sight;
By the cry with which in death,
Thou didst yield Thy parting breath.
Jesus, Saviour, etc.

By Thy weeping Mother's woe,
By the sword that pierced her through,
When in anguish standing by,
On the Cross she saw Thee die.
Jesus, Saviour, etc.

Prayer, O Lord (page 189).
Our Father, etc.

THE SIXTH WORD

At that time one of them that stood by, ran and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar and gave Him to drink. When Jesus therefore had taken the vinegar, He said: It is consummated. (*John xix, 29–30.*)

It is now approaching the ninth hour of the day. The great drama of the Crucifixion is drawing to a close. The sun, long hidden behind the great bank of clouds that hung over Jerusalem and the Holy Mount, now begins to reappear high over the western horizon. All that is yet to take place is the final rendering of the soul of the Saviour into the hands of His Father. Like the Conqueror that He is, He surveys the field of combat and sees that everything laid out for Him to do has been accomplished and the victory is complete. All that had been foretold of Him by the

prophets had been fulfilled. He went back in spirit to the first great prophecy made by God Himself in the sentence imposed by Him on the tempter: "I will put enmities between thee and the Seed of the Woman. He shall crush thy head and thou shalt lie in wait for His heel." And now the devil is under His foot, and the Redemption He came to accomplish is near at hand.

All the other events pertaining to the great fight foretold by the prophets have taken place. He came of the royal line of David. He had for His Mother the purest of virgins. He was born in Bethlehem of Ephrata. He lived for thirty years in a home at Nazareth. He preached the Gospel to the poor. He healed the sick. He raised the dead. He cleansed the lepers. He cast out the devils from the bodies of the possessed. Oh yes; He laid the foundations of His Church. He purged His Father's house of the buyers and sellers who had profaned it by turning it into a market-place. He rode in triumph into Jerusalem. Greatest of all, He instituted the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and gave us His Flesh to eat and His Blood to drink.

Lastly, the great drama of the Redemption itself was all but accomplished. He passed through the dreadful agony and sweat of blood in the Garden. He surveyed again the scene of the scourging in Pilate's Hall, and saw the Sacred Blood pouring out in torrents from His bruised Body. The dreadful scene of the crowning with thorns is once again enacted before His eyes. He sees Himself wearily carrying the Cross up the dolorous way to Calvary, amid the mockeries

and contempt of the soldiers and the frenzied multitude. Every item pertaining to the Crucifixion, as foretold in the Scriptures, has been fulfilled to the letter. And now He sees the great triumph that awaits Him in the salvation of innumerable souls, who but await the moment of His death for their delivery from the bondage of sin. As He Himself had foretold, "When I shall be lifted up, I shall draw all things to Myself." Thus the victor surveys the field of combat. And in the satisfaction of His heart He sees that the victory is complete.

He looks up into the face of His Eternal Father and sees that the clouds of anger which separated Him from the Beatific Vision have passed away. The divine justice has been satisfied. Sin has been expiated to the full. The human race has been redeemed, and the fathers in Limbo but await the few moments of time yet to be gone through to receive the Conqueror, who is Himself to announce to them the tidings of their delivery. "It is indeed a day which the Lord hath made."

Jesus looks into the future. He sees the Church established in all lands—that Church which is to last to the end of time. He sees the innumerable multitude of souls that are to be drawn into the fold, the virtues of the just, and salvation extended to all mankind as the result of the great combat. He sees the veil rent that separated man from God, and He hears the song of the blessed spirits: "Open ye eternal gates and let the Just enter in," and sees the everlasting joys that are to be accorded them in Heaven.

"It is consummated." What more is to be done but to render His soul into the hands of His Father and to return whence He came? But in the meantime the record must be made that He consummated for us a plenteous Redemption. Hence, the strong cry which resounds throughout the universe. It is heard in the depths of hell, and the princes of evil are by it thrown into rage and despair. It is heard by mankind to the uttermost generation yet to come. And even as the walls of Jericho fell at the sound of the trumpets of the Israelites; so, as the consequence of that triumphant cry, the chains of sin and slavery to the devil fall from men's limbs. The Redemption of the world is accomplished. It ascends into Heaven and rings in the ears of the Most High, and at the sound of its triumphant notes the anger of God is appeased. Justice and mercy have kissed. Peace is restored between God and man.

Oh, surely, "it is a day which the Lord hath made," a day to be held in eternal remembrance. "It is consummated."

We also, dearly beloved, should rejoice at these triumphant words. They are the charter of our liberty, the record of the blotting out of the death sentence that was written against us in the book of God. Oh, well may we rejoice, dearly beloved, and while we rejoice at the accomplishment of our Redemption, may we lay hold of the graces purchased for us at such a price, may we be faithful to the lights and helps given us, that thus we may be numbered among the elect, and made sharers in salvation.

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.
Body of Christ, save me.
Blood of Christ, inebriate me.
Water out of the side of Christ, wash me.
Sacred Heart, inflame me.
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
O good Jesus, hear me.
Within Thy wounds hide me.
Suffer me not to be separated from Thee.
From the malignant enemy defend me.
At the hour of my death call me,
And bid me come to Thee,
That with Thy saints I may praise Thee
For all eternity. Amen.

Prayer, O Lord (page 189).
Our Father, etc.

THE LAST WORD OF JESUS ON THE CROSS

(The following meditation is adapted in good part from Bellord's meditation on "The Cause of Christ's Death.")

And it was almost the sixth hour; and there was darkness all over the land until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. And Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said: Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit. And having said this, He gave up the Ghost. (*Luke xxiii, 4–6.*)

1. These last words of Jesus on the Cross give a dramatic ending to the tragedy of Calvary. For whereas it was long drawn out in its details, it was

sudden in its close. Moreover, in ordinary deaths the sufferer passes away from extreme exhaustion; here, on the contrary, Jesus to the last showed robust strength and vigor. This leads us to reverently inquire what was the immediate cause of the death of our Saviour.

That His physical and mental sufferings were sufficient, nay, more than sufficient to cause His death, anyone who reads the history of the Passion can infer. The Saviour Himself indeed tells us as much; for in that pathetic cry given forth by Him in His agony in the Garden, He says: "My soul is sorrowful unto death." The long watching, the outrages, the scourging, the carrying of the Cross, the process of Crucifixion; all would have led to a gradual failure of strength and death by exhaustion.

But the event showed that death did not result from these. To the last He dwelt on the prophecies; He observed those who surrounded Him; He attended to details. And now the loud and piercing cry at the moment of dissolution shows Him to be still possessed of much physical strength. These facts fully accord with what our Lord Himself said: "I lay down My life, and no man taketh it away from Me . . . but I lay it down Myself; and I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again." Hence, it may be concluded that the separation of His soul from His Body was not the result of the physical violence He endured, but of His own free will.

This accords, moreover, with His sovereignty as Lord of life and death. It accords with His power as

God, and the deliberate choice with which He died for us. The Jews were not able to kill Him before the appointed moment arrived. During the Passion, and especially in the agony in the Garden, He endured many times over what was sufficient to cause His death. But He did not die till He Himself pronounced the decree, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." Then He allowed His mental and bodily sufferings to take effect. He suspended the divine influx which made Him immortal. He allowed death to approach, as He gave permission to the temple guards to seize Him in the Garden.

2. If we would further investigate the immediate cause of that death, we have every reason to believe what is told in the *Revelations of St. Bridget*, that "Jesus died of a broken heart." This accords with the prophecies, "I am poured out like water"; "My Heart is become as wax in the midst of My bowels," and again, as it is in the Hebrew: "reproach hath broken My heart." The facts of the agony in the Garden indicate that our Lord was at the point of death from paralysis of the heart's functions, caused by mortal anguish. The angel gave Him new strength, and the heart's action became so violent as to expel the blood through the pores of the body. This was the agony or struggle against the horror at the sight of our sins. The same agony renewed on the Cross caused the rupture which is called a broken heart. Such a death is always accompanied by a piercing cry and with the effusion of collected blood into the region

around the heart, where it is disintegrated into red-clot and serum—"blood and water." Thus it was that the love of Jesus for us, and the weight of our sins were the actual and complete cause of His death, and led to the complete outpouring of His Precious Blood. This was the real "rending of the veil" of the Holy of Holies. We, then, sinners, really caused our Saviour's death by our sins, we broke our Saviour's Heart! We brought Him to His painful and humiliating death on Calvary!

When children are brought to realize that by their wayward and unfeeling action they have saddened a kind and tender parent, what can they do but regret it bitterly, and by a wise, virtuous, and irreproachable conduct try to make amends for their impiety?

My brethren, you and I, all of us, have been guilty of the most unseemly conduct towards our good and tender Father, Jesus Christ. During His Passion we were among His declared enemies. We broke His Sacred Heart! Yes, it was grief at our sins that broke the Heart of Jesus. In the garden of Gethsemani we caused Him to sweat Blood, and forced Him to declare that His "soul was sorrowful even unto death." It was we who, by our sins of sensuality, caused His Body to be scourged, so that there "was no sound spot left in Him" and His Blood bespattered the hall of Pilate. Our sins of pride it was that pressed the cruel thorns of His crown into His sacred brow, so that His Blood streamed down His neck and face, and festooned His hair and beard. The weight of our

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sins pressed heavily on His shoulders as He carried the Cross over the dolorous way to Calvary.

We were among the frenzied crowd that surged around the Cross and jeered Him in His agony. The Jews, the high priests, Herod, Pilate, the soldiers, all—who were they but our agents in wreaking cruelty and malice on the innocent Saviour? We broke His tender Heart. We shed His Blood in the final effort and agony of Calvary.

On your knees then! And before the throne of divine mercy, from out of the depths of your grieved heart, cry out: Mercy! Jesus! Mercy! Lord, we acknowledge that we have grievously offended Thee by our past sins. We have broken Thy Sacred Heart. "Out of the depths of our humiliation and sorrow then we cry to Thee, O Lord: Lord, hear our voice. Let Thy ears be attentive to the voice of our supplication. If Thou wilt mark iniquities, O Lord: Lord, who shall stand it?" "Have mercy on us, O God, according to Thy great mercy! And according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out our iniquities. Wash us yet more from our iniquities and cleanse us from our sins; for we know our iniquities, and our sins are always before us."

Prayer, O Lord (page 189).

Our Father, etc.

Should additional time remain, it can be fittingly employed in making the Stations of the Cross, or in the recitation of the five sorrowful mysteries of the Rosary; and the whole service should terminate with the recitation of five "Our Fathers" and "Hail Marys" for the Pope's intention, in order to gain the plenary indulgence conceded by the Church.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalen and Mary the mother of James and Salome brought sweet spices, that coming they might anoint Jesus. And very early in the morning the first day of the week they came to the sepulchre, the sun being now risen, and they said to one another: Who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And looking they saw the stone rolled back: for it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre they saw a young man sitting on the right side clothed with a white robe; and they were astonished. Who saith to them: Be not affrighted. You seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. He is risen. He is not here. Behold the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee; there you shall see Him as He told you. (*Mark xvi, 1–7.*)

I

1. Before Jesus Christ the tomb was always looked upon as the fatal rock on which all human greatness was wont to split and perish. Death had triumphed over all, and no man had yet been found on earth who did not end his career by being made the prey of this all-devouring monster.

In vain had the great ones of the world tried in some sort to survive their own discomfiture. They

chose even to combat Death on the very field of his fame and the place of his triumph, by raising to themselves costly mausoleums which had no other foundation than the nothingness of their dust. In vain had they tried to render at least their sepulchres glorious by engraving on them in marble and brass the titles of a nobility which once was theirs.

All these garnishments served only to render their tombs more brilliant trophies of the conqueror, Death, and monuments the more illustrious of their overthrow. The bare inscription written on their tombs is proof of this. The first two words will tell you all; you need go no further. The rest may perhaps tell you what they had been; but these alone will tell you what they are. "Here lieth," they will say, "this man, great according to the world, but little in the eyes of God, who, having been lifted up with pride and ambition like the waves of the sea, finally dashed himself in impotence against the dust of this tomb."

Here he lies, that famous conqueror who had astonished the world with the fame of his exploits. The earth which he held captive was silent in his presence. But behold him in the end a captive in the dark prison-house of death, where he is himself condemned to a silence everlasting.

2. But where human greatness meets with its overthrow, that of Jesus Christ begins to be the more solidly established. The angels to-day engrave on His tomb an epitaph very different indeed from that engraved on the tombs of men. "He is not here," they

say, "He has arisen! Why seek ye the living among the dead?"

The prophet foretold that the Messias would display for the first time in the world's history "a glorious sepulchre." A glorious sepulchre is not one in which the dead is enclosed. It is one wherein he is enclosed no longer, and from which he has come forth by his own power. And this one fact is argument enough, according to the Prince of the Apostles, to prove the Divinity of Jesus and the truth of the religion which He taught.

"My brethren," says St. Peter, addressing the Jews from the steps of the Supper Chamber on the great day of Pentecost, "see we have here among us still the tomb of David, the greatest man of our race. The dust of that monarch is still there enclosed. Go out to that of Jesus Christ, you will find His Body there no longer. He has rescued Himself from the arms of death. This Jesus Christ, whom you have crucified, whom I announce to you, is then greater than David. He is greater than man. He is divine, and the religion which He preached to you is true."

He has conquered, then, this "Lion of the tribe of Juda"! He has conquered Death itself! He is become more powerful it would seem since He was crucified! He has bound that strong arm that had power since the beginning of the world to rule all human affairs! He has gloriously triumphed; and this triumph of Jesus Christ over death and hell is the source of our triumph also, and of our glory—the invincible

proof of our faith; the foundation of our hope; the source of all our graces.

II

1. But it is not enough for us to glory with our Saviour in His Resurrection from the tomb; we must also share in His triumph; and as He has arisen to a life of glory, so should we arise to a life of grace and Christian perfection modeled after His.

Brethren, we have sinned in the past; we have basely sunk into the grave of sin! And, oh, how many are there to-day in this religious city, who, in spite of the graces of the holy Lenten season, in spite of the overwhelming graces of Redemption week, in spite of the joyous notes of the Easter bells proclaiming a jubilee of graces to the whole Church of Christ, still lie prone in the grave of mortal sin.

But by the grace of God we can arise, and by the power of that omnipotent arm that raised our Saviour from the tomb, we also are enabled to break the bonds of spiritual death and lead a life conformable to that of the risen Saviour.

And this is what should engage our earnest attention to-day, especially if this bright Easter day should find us still shrouded in the winding bands of spiritual death.

2. But, brethren, I would not have you believe that every resurrection is commendable, is profitable to the soul, and pleasing to God, in whose name, apparently, it is effected. For there is a false resurrec-

tion, and there is an imperfect one. There is a resurrection that results only in a temporary spiritual life, and there is one that precipitates the soul into greater miseries.

We read in Scripture that the unhappy Saul, the first king of Israel, being hard pressed by the Philistines and feeling himself abandoned by the Spirit of God on account of his sins, sought the witch of Endor and besought her to raise for him the ghost of the prophet Samuel, in order that he might declare to him the will of Heaven. And it pleased God to permit the ghost of Samuel to arise from the ground in the form of an aged man, clothed in a mantle. Addressing the king in tones of anger, he reproached him, saying: "Why do you come thus to trouble my repose? Know, then, that your crimes shall meet with their reward. To-morrow you and your sons shall die by the sword, and your kingdom shall pass to David, whose presence you cannot bear." This uprisal of Samuel from the tomb was not a true resurrection; it was but a phantom. That soul was not restored by conjunction with the body. Its presence there was a forced one, and one that portended dire evils to the unhappy king and his family.

Ah, how many resurrections from sin at a time like this are so only in appearance? How many who, driven by human respect, by the force of custom, by the threats of the Church's penalties—how many, I say, comply externally with the Paschal duty; rise, apparently, by Confession and Communion, whilst all the while they retain their affection for sin and

refuse to give up evil associations which were the cause of their former falls? They rise, indeed, but their resurrection is a phantom—the mere ghost of a conversion. Their hearts are not warmed with the living fire of charity. Their minds are not enlightened by the light of grace. Their souls remain dead and buried in the grave of habitual sin, and their Confessions and Communions call down upon them rather the chastisement of final impenitence, which is the forerunner of everlasting ruin. There is, then, in the Christian world a false resurrection, and one that portends dire evils to come.

3. There is a second kind of resurrection spoken of in Scripture, a true and genuine one, effected by the intervention of the almighty power, but still temporary and imperfect—a resurrection which time will bring to naught and which is destined to be swallowed up in the devastation which awaits all things perishable. Such is the resurrection recorded in the Gospel as accomplished by our Lord on the widow's son of Naim. Such was the resurrection of Lazarus, the circumstances of which you all remember so well. Such was the resurrection of the daughter of Jairus. Such were the resurrections of many men and women effected by our Lord and His Apostles and the saints of the Old and the New Testament. These were all true and valid resurrections, it is true, and they were accomplished, and could be accomplished, only by the outstretched arm of God. But alas, the widow's son of Naim died again; and Lazarus died again; and Demetrius died again; and the widow's son of Sarepta

died again; and the daughter of Jairus died again; and Tabitha died again; and all those raised from the dead through the prayers of the saints of every age sank back into the grave, and all at last were made to submit to that inexorable sentence pronounced by an outraged God: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread all the days of thy life, till thou returnest to the earth, out of which thou wast taken; for dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return."

Ah, how many are there here to-day who, perhaps, with the help of God, have risen from a career of sin, and at this moment feel within them the lusty life of grace, but who, through human frailty, through neglect of prayer, through the strength of their own sinful passions and bad habits, above all, through their imprudently thrusting themselves into the occasion of sin, will fall again into a state of spiritual death, never again, perhaps, to be awakened to a life of grace by the quickening voice of God, but to be abandoned to eternal reprobation. These are the abortions of the Church's spiritual life and the victims of their own insane folly.

4. But give me a spiritual uprisal modeled truly on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Give me a spiritual life analogous to His during the Easter days. Give me a resurrection, I say, modeled on that of Jesus Christ, and an after-life like to His, of whom the Gospel tells us that, to show that He was truly risen from the dead, He performed the functions of a living man by daily conversing with the disciples, by eating with them, and by the performance of other vital actions.

So you, I say, show forth to the world that your resurrection to the spiritual life is one effected by the help of grace and destined to be perpetual, by speaking, aye, thundering into the ears of God the voice of prayer and of contrition for your past sins; by eating, yes, sharing in the ineffable banquet of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ by frequent Communion; and by doing the works of Christ; that is, by the practice of the Christian virtues. Give me such a resurrection and such a subsequent life. Of such a one it can be said what was said of Jesus Christ, that, being risen from the dead, "He dieth no more; death hath no longer dominion over him," but the supernatural life begun here by grace is destined to be perfected hereafter in glory.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

I

1. Every season of the ecclesiastical year has its own special character and its own peculiar spirit, to which respond in the hearts of those who truly live the life of the Church, a sentiment and a devotion all its own. Thus, the spirit of Advent is one of expectation and of preparation for the mystic coming among us of Jesus Christ. Christmas is a season of family and social joy, for that indeed, "a Child is born to us, and a Son is given us, and the empire is upon His shoulders."

Lent is a season of penance and purification of heart, in order that we may commemorate in a worthy manner the mystery of Christ's Passion and death.

And now the Easter time, what is *its* character? It is a season of triumphant joy, and faith, and hope, which stirs in the life of the Church and in the hearts of her devoted children—of joy, in the realization of Christ's victory over death and hell—of faith in His divinity, and in that of our religion which is invincibly confirmed thereby—and of hope, since the Resurrection of Jesus from the tomb is the cause and the type of our resurrection.

2. Eastertide is, I say, a season of triumphant joy

in the realization of Christ's victory over death and hell. When the Jews, in mockery asked of our Lord a sign to show that He was the Son of God, as He claimed to be, He replied: "A wicked and unfaithful race seeketh a sign, and a sign shall not be given, but the sign of the prophet, Jonas. For, as Jonas was for three days and three nights in the belly of the whale; so must the Son of Man be for three days and three nights in the bowels of the earth."

This challenge was remembered by Christ's enemies on the day of His Crucifixion. For, after His sacred Body was consigned to the tomb on Calvary, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pontius Pilate and said to him: "Sir, that seducer said while he was yet alive that he would rise from the dead on the third day: command, therefore, the sepulchre to be guarded until the third day, lest perhaps his disciples come and steal him away, and say to the people, 'He is risen from the dead,' and the last error will be worse than the first." And the governor replied: "You have soldiers of your own; go and guard it as you think fit." And they did so. And now, on the morning of the third day, behold, as He had foretold, His holy soul came back from Limbo and reunited itself to His body, and Christ arose, glorious and immortal, to the discomfiture of His enemies, and the consolation and joy of all the faithful, a joy which has affected the whole Church in every generation down to the present day.

3. But the Resurrection of our Lord is not only a source of joy and triumph to the Church and the

faithful; it is, moreover, the invincible proof of His divinity, and of the truth of our holy religion. From the beginning of the world it had never been known that a man had raised himself from the dead—a feat which reason tells us can be done only by divine power.

And this proof the chief of the Apostles employed on the great day of Pentecost. "Men, brethren," he said, addressing the multitude from the steps of the upper room, which formed the chamber of the Last Supper; "behold here beneath us the tomb of David, who was the greatest man of our race. Open that tomb: you will find the bones of the prophet still there enclosed. Go out to Calvary and see the tomb of Jesus Christ. You will find His body enclosed there no longer. He has conquered death. He has arisen, He is then greater than David. He is greater than man. He is God. This Jesus then, whom you have crucified, is divine, and the gospel we preach to you is true." The logic of this argument, the facts of which were known to all, could not be withstood, and so we have the fact recorded in the Acts of the Apostles that there and then three thousand souls joined themselves to the company of the Apostles.

This same proof has stood the test of nineteen hundred years, and has been the cause of the conversion of millions to the religion of Jesus Christ.

4. Lastly, the Resurrection of Jesus is the assured foundation and cause of our hope, as it is the type of our resurrection. It is the foundation of our hope in the resurrection of our bodies on the Last Day;

for, as St. Paul says, "by a man came death, and by a man came the resurrection of the dead," and again, "as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive."

It is the cause of our resurrection, for, as St. Thomas says, "That which is first in every species is the cause of those which are after." Christ by reason of His Resurrection is called in Sacred Scripture, "the first-born among the dead," and "the firstfruits of them that sleep." As death, the separation of the soul from the body is the penalty of sin; so, also the reunion of the soul and the body is the fruit of the merits of Christ. But without laboring this point, which is patent and can be incontrovertibly demonstrated, let me say that our Lord, by reason of His humanity, is the Mediator between God and man; and therefore every grace, spiritual and bodily, is given us by God by reason of that mediation, and among them that which we are discussing of our resurrection from the dead.

II

1. And here let me say some words concerning the constitution of our being, as it bears on this question. When God created Adam, "He formed his body," says Sacred Scripture, "out of the slime of the earth, and He breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul." Man has, therefore, a double nature. Angel and animal at the same time, he stands, as regards his body, at the head

of the material world, and beneath him there is a gradation of beings down to the smallest blade of grass, down to the minutest atom, down to the lightest electron, which seems to be the unit of the material creation. On the other hand, if we consider his soul, he stands at the entrance of the angelic world, and beyond him there exists in countless numbers the empire of the blessed spirits, and "as star differeth from star in glory," so do the angelic phalanxes rise in gradated holiness and perfection upwards towards the throne of God. As manifesting the wisdom of the Creator, each of the angelic personages forms in himself a distinct species with characteristics peculiarly his own, and altogether different from his fellows. They are pure intelligences, formed of spiritual substance, like to the being of God Himself.

It is the particular characteristic of man that his soul is by nature designed to be united to a material body, of which it is the form and the motor, or moving agent. He is, then, the product of two apparently incongruous natures, the spiritual and the material. As a spirit, his soul is by nature immortal and cannot be destroyed; while his body, being made up of matter, naturally goes to pieces and perishes.

2. But, though mortal by nature, God willed at our creation that the body of unfallen man be, through His divine power, preserved from corruption and death. The separation of the soul from the body by death is, therefore, a penalty of sin. "On the day that thou eatest the fruit thereof," said God to Adam,

"thou shalt surely die." But though He condemned man to die as the penalty for sin, it was not His will to destroy him forever. The body does not constitute the man. The soul does not constitute the man. Only the body and the soul united constitute the man. The penalty of death is, therefore, but a temporary one, and it was God's will that through the mediation of Jesus Christ His body should rise from the tomb and be reunited with the soul. "I believe that my Redeemer liveth," says Job, "and that one day I shall rise again from the tomb, and in my flesh I shall see God, my Saviour. It is I myself shall see Him, and none other, and my eyes shall look upon Him."

This was the assurance and the hope of the Fathers. But though there is in man a longing and an aspiration that the constituent elements of his nature remain united, there is of itself in the body no aptitude for the preservation or restoration of that union. This work must be divine and can come only from God; and the restoration of that union, God wills, should come only through the mediation of the divine humanity of Jesus Christ.

III

1. This restoration was effected first of all in the sacred humanity of our Lord; and this phenomenon is called the Resurrection. And, therefore, because God willed that the Resurrection of Christ be also the type of ours, Jesus is called "the firstfruits of those that sleep," and "the first-born among the

dead." And, therefore, also through His divine mediation shall our resurrection be effected.

The Resurrection of Christ is the type of our resurrection.

Now Sacred Scripture tells us that the Resurrection of our Lord was a glorious, a triumphant Resurrection. It possessed in an eminent degree all the characteristics of the risen bodies of the saints, as enumerated by St. Paul. "Christ, dying once, He dieth no more. Death hath no longer dominion over Him." "His body did shine as the sun," and the prophet celebrates His victory in words of incomparable elevation: "O death! where is thy victory? O death! where is thy sting?" Behold the pattern, now let us study the copy.

St. Paul in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, which treats of the resurrection, enumerates four characteristics of the risen body of the saints, for, speaking of it [the body], he says: "It is sown a corruptible body: it shall rise in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor: it shall rise in glory. It is sown in weakness: it shall rise in power. It is sown a natural body: it shall rise a spiritual body" (1 Cor. XV, 42).

The first quality of the body of the saints in the resurrection is impassibility or incorruption. It can suffer neither sickness, nor sorrow, nor death—none of those ailments that flesh is heir to here below. "Death is swallowed up in victory." Like Jesus Christ, "they shall die no more. Death hath no longer dominion over them." St. John in the Apocalypse describes the blessed lot of the saints in Paradise: "And God

shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and death shall be no more: nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrowing, shall be any more; for the former things are passed away."

2. Another quality of the bodies of the saints in the resurrection is glory. "It is sown in dishonor: it shall rise in glory." Though after His Resurrection Christ ordinarily put on none of the glories of His risen body, this was because He willed to appear to His disciples as they were wont to know Him; yet we know that at the Transfiguration He assumed somewhat of the glory of the Resurrection; that "His face did shine as the sun, and His garments were white as snow." So will it be with the bodies of the saints in the resurrection. Renewed and purified, they shall shine with a glory which shall flood the soul. And as "star differeth from star in glory; so shall the bodies of the saints be." And though their bodies shine with the brightness of ten thousand suns, still will they not hurt the sense of sight, but their light will be grateful to the eyes of the beholder; and hence, in the Apocalypse, their brilliance is described as resembling that of the jasper stone, grateful and joy-giving.

3. The third quality of the risen body is agility. It will have the power to pass through space with inconceivable rapidity. This agility will not be as that of the soul; for, it will still have all the qualities of a living body. The soul, being a spirit, is not comprehended in space. Hence, it can pass from one region to another without passing through the intermediate

regions, even as our intellect, one of the powers of the soul, by a simple direction of the will can pass in the sweep of its gaze from sphere to sphere. It will not be so with the body even in the resurrection; for, it will be enclosed in space; and, hence, it must pass over the intermediate regions. But being completely under the dominion of the soul, that space of time is inconceivably short. St. Paul, describing the resurrection of the dead, says that "in the twinkling of an eye the dead shall rise." And we know that Christ appeared in an instant when He willed, as to the disciples at Emaus, or gathered together in the Supper Chamber, or by the seashore. This was not a miracle, as similar cases before His death (*e. g.*, when He appeared to the disciples walking on the water); but it was the natural gift of His risen Body and the result of its complete subjection to the soul.

4. The last quality of the risen body is subtlety. "It is sown a material body: it shall rise a spiritual body." It is not that the risen body has been changed into a spirit, but it puts on spiritual qualities. It has the power, therefore, of penetrating material substances, even as the soul pervades every part of the body; nor does it, as some hold, become rarefied like air or ether. It has still all the qualities of a body in the midst of life, as our Lord, to prove the truth of His Resurrection, said, "Touch Me and see that I am flesh and bones." It is rather that the risen body has arrived at the most complete perfection. It is an axiom in philosophy that every form (or ordinating agent) assimilates to itself the matter of which it is

the form. The soul is the form of the body, and in the blessed all the obstacles that resist the action of the soul in the present life are destroyed, so that the body is in the most complete subjection to it. Therefore it is that, like the soul, the body has put on the quality of subtlety or the power to penetrate other substances, and pass through them; even as our Lord on the afternoon of Easter Sunday entered the Supper Chamber "where the disciples were gathered together, the doors being shut"; or as He rose from the tomb without removing the great stone that closed the entrance to it.

These glorious qualities of the bodies of the saints in the resurrection make known to us some of the rewards Christ has in store for those who love and serve Him here. And their consideration should be an incentive to us to labor the more zealously in His service.

O brethren, who will complain of the hardships of life if he reflects that, after a few years at most, all that troubles us now will have passed away, and an eternal glory will be ours? How can sickness, or sorrow, or disease, afflict us, if we know that every sickness, every sorrow, every pain, will bring increased glory to body and soul, that we shall be with God in beatitude, and that our sufferings will be succeeded by endless bliss? Let the consideration of Jesus Christ in the Resurrection, therefore, be our daily occupation in these Paschal times. It will animate us to fight bravely the battles of life; to bear patiently life's sorrows; and it will take out of death its horrors. As

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is said concerning the Resurrection by one who reflected deeply on its triumphs, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?"

I

THE QUALITIES OF OUR DEVOTION TO MARY

Our Devotion to Mary Must be Constant

1. St. Modestus of Jerusalem, St. John of Damascus, St. Gregory of Tours, and other Fathers of the Church tell us that Mary remained on earth for many years after the Ascension of our Blessed Lord. During that time she led a life of perfection, and, as far as the duties she was called on to fulfill permitted, of retirement and prayer, longing for the time when she would be called to join her Son in the kingdom of His glory.

In those years, we may well believe, she was looked up to by the Apostles and pastors of the early Church. To her they went in all their difficulties, to receive comfort and instruction. And she in turn beheld with the joy of a mother's heart the young Christian communities grow in perfection "like olive plants around the table of the Lord." Her presence cheered them on and her example was to them as a beacon light directing their hearts heavenward. And we cannot doubt that it was in good part due to the influence of her presence and example that that change was brought about among the Christians of Jerusalem, the beautiful picture of whose lives St. Luke gives us

in the Acts of the Apostles, where he says that "they had all things in common; and their possessions and goods they sold and divided according as each one had need; and continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking the bread of life from house to house, they took their meat with gladness and simplicity of heart."

But at length the time came when it was God's will that Mary's sensible presence should be taken away from them; and, as we are told, the Apostles, who had been scattered over the world preaching the Gospel to the Gentile peoples, "hastened from every land under the sun, led and impelled by supernal power" (St. Modestus), and came together to Jerusalem. And whilst they were there, a vision of angels appeared to them, and the psalmody of the hosts of Heaven was heard, and in the midst of the divine glory our Blessed Lady gave forth her soul into the hands of God. She died—not of old age or infirmity—but from excess of love. For that heart of hers, capacious as it was and magnanimous beyond those of all men, was yet a finite thing, and could not withstand the fire of love that burned within it, nor compass the dear object for which it yearned; so at last it broke for very excess of love. And whilst the Apostles with tuneful lips and tearful eyes sang dirges around her tomb, they heard the music of angelic choirs, who also kept the vigils around the body of their Queen.

After three days, St. Thomas, who had been preaching the faith in the distant Indies, arrived in Jerusalem. For it was the judgment of God that the

disciple who would not believe in the Resurrection "unless he saw the wounds in the Saviour's sacred hands and feet, and put his fingers into the place of the nails, and put his hand into His sacred side," should be deprived of the privilege of witnessing the blessed death of the Mother of God. And as he was desirous of seeing that loved countenance once more, the other Apostles rolled back the stone from the entrance to the tomb, when, lo, to the astonishment and joy of all, nothing appeared but an empty tomb, a winding-sheet, and an ineffably sweet odor that pervaded the whole place.

Seek not, Thomas, "the living among the dead!" She whom you desire to behold has gone, accompanied by angels, to Heaven, and is already seated at the right hand of her Son, the Queen of angels and of men!

2. Is not our position these days, that is, in the early days of June, dearly beloved, somewhat like that of the Apostles around the empty tomb of the Virgin at Jerusalem? During the sweet month that is now past, was she not in the midst of us cheering us and filling us with a holy joy?

Did we not feel the influence of her presence among us, and a tenderness which often brought tears to our eyes as we assisted at her devotions, or prayed to her in the closet of our heart? Was she not as a mother looking on us with a beaming countenance? And has not each one of us felt the pleasing odor of grace which she shed upon us in return for the little devotions we practised in her honor?

But time goes on, and now the month of May is past! 'Tis gone—and it seems as if something very dear to us had been forcibly wrested from us. For this year 'tis gone! The month belonged to time, and time has taken it away.

3. But there are some things, my friends, that belong to eternity, and those, time cannot take away; and one of these is devotion to Mary. Devotion to her must be a constant thing with us which shall not be affected by circumstances or time.

There are some things that are always necessary to us—that, in fact, cannot be done without; hence, we have them always at hand. Thus, we see in every house the common necessaries of life; as, for instance, the bread which we partake of every day. Again, we find need of clothing at all times. We could not preserve the natural heat of our bodies, we could not sustain life without these.

Devotion to Mary is always necessary. We can never do without it. We can never lay it aside. Our spiritual life would fail within us were we to put it away. Devotion to Mary it is that will provide us with a daily supply of grace, which will preserve us from spiritual starvation. Devotion to Mary it is that will keep warm within us the life of charity, without which we should be but as putrefying corpses, fit only to be cast into the sepulchre of hell. As we have a constant need of grace to sustain the supernatural life of our souls, so we have need of a constant devotion to her, who has been constituted our perpetual intercessor with God, and whom God has appointed the

channel of all those graces that come to us from Jesus Christ, who is their source.

4. Again, the devil is the personal enemy of each one of us. He hates us and pursues us with an implacable hatred. From the moment that he beheld our first parents created by God to fill the thrones left vacant by him and his rebel angels, this subtle enemy has been filled with dire jealousy and has declared eternal warfare against our race. He plots against us and dogs each one of us every moment of our lives from the cradle to the grave, that he may, by every means or by any means, make us commit sin and so drag us down to share his eternal ruin.

But Mary is the personal enemy of the devil, having been specially appointed by God to crush the audacity of the evil one and trample his pride under her feet. This the Almighty declared on the day he brought about our fall: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman . . . She shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel." And when St. John beheld the famous vision of the woman clothed with the sun, did he not see "standing before her a great red dragon, whose tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth? And he tried to prevail against the woman and devour the Man Child that was born to her. And when he could not, he was angry and went to make war against the rest of her children who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."

This war he wages everywhere, at all times. He em-

ploys against us all subtle forces. He assaults us at every vulnerable point. He knows where we are weak. He plies his engines of war with consummate skill. He prepares ambuscades. He makes powerful assaults. He rushes on us with the fury of a lion.

We of ourselves are weak and unable to cope with his superior skill, and alone must infallibly succumb to his assaults. Our very strength is weakness in comparison to his. God for His own good reasons has willed that it be so. All our strength is from on high, descending from the "Father of lights," coming to us through the medium of Mary. Therefore it is incumbent on us at all times to turn for strength to her; and hence, she is justly styled by the Church, "Help of the weak."

And those who in the hour of temptation called not upon her for assistance, but presumptuously confided in their own strength—oh, miserable is their fall and dire the ruin that has come upon them. Who shall tell where they are and what has become of them? Cast a look into hell and behold the bottomless gulf teeming with agonized beings. Behold its spacious vaults surcharged with the souls of the damned, and weep for the eternal loss of those who suffer forever because they failed to call upon Mary in the hour of temptation. There is one thing that could close the gates of hell forever and prevent the precipitate flight of those who go down thither—a single "Hail Mary" said in time.

See, then, dearly beloved, that your devotion to the Mother of God be a constant, lifelong devotion,

not taken up merely by fits and starts in emotional intervals of your life, but one that will act as a great fundamental principle and will guide you on all occasions and in all the emergencies of life, so that ever and always you will strive to promote her interests and honor, and will look up to her as your guide, protector, and mother.

Thus will it nourish and warm in you a love of God and of virtue, and will be for you a powerful protection against the assaults of the evil one, and a sure augury and pledge of final perseverance.

II

Our Devotion to Mary Must be Practical

1. In the second place our devotion to Mary must be a practical devotion, i. e., it must show results in the conduct of our lives.

We all love to flatter ourselves with the belief that we are truly devoted to the Blessed Virgin. What Catholic, man or woman, does not? But not everyone shows his devotion to the Blessed Virgin in a manner that is in every sense pleasing to her. Many pray to her; talk about her; wear her scapulars and medals; have her pictures in their houses; say her Rosary; but not every one of them, I say, has a devotion that is truly pleasing to her; and with all this they show many things in their actions and manner of life that offend her and are opposed to her. In a word, devotion to the Blessed Virgin consists not in words, or fancies, or emblems, but in practices and

virtues. How, then, shall we prove our devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary?

Dearly beloved, there is deep down in the heart of every one of us a something—call it sentiment, or affinity, or whatever you will—which moves us to love and cherish those in whom we perceive qualities akin to those we perceive in ourselves. And so it is with Mary. If we would have a true devotion to her, if we would pay her the homage of our love and confidence, and in return draw down on ourselves the shield of her love and patronage, we must try to copy her virtues and become like unto her.

Now, if we consider the life of the Blessed Virgin as it is handed down to us in Gospel and tradition, we cannot but be struck with the fact that, though she be full of grace, and perfect before God, yet there are two virtues that seem to predominate in her character—namely, humility and love. And first, humility. This virtue so beautiful, so real, built upon the solid foundation of the knowledge of our own nothingness of ourselves, and of our total dependence on the bounty of God for all that we have and are—this virtue, I say, comes before us with striking prominence in the history of her life.

From the first instant of her conception she was endowed with a perfection of grace and sanctity far exceeding that of all other creatures. She stood higher in the estimation of God than all besides. The perfection of her soul was the glory of creation. She was the masterpiece of God's hand. Far beyond where all others terminated their career of sanctity, she began.

For the consummation of virtue consists in charity and in the acquirement of perfect sinlessness and beauty in God's sight. And Mary commences with a sinlessness, a beauty of soul, a perfection of charity, far exceeding the most glorious of God's servants. And hence, the Fathers of the Church have no hesitation in applying to her the words of the Psalmist: "*Fundamenta ejus in montibus sanctis*— The foundations of her sanctity were laid on the holy mountains." What then must have been the perfection of Mary when, from that first moment of her Immaculate Conception, she ascended from virtue to virtue, multiplied grace on grace, till at last she is made the jewelled palace in which the Lord of Glory loves to dwell? What must have been the greatness of her who was raised to the dignity of Mother of God? "Thy walls, O Jerusalem, are all precious stones, and thy towers are built of gems!"

And after all this glory and dignity, is Mary elated? Does she sound her praises and make the earth re-echo with the glory of her name? Does she raise herself above others and demand that all should look upon her as their superior? For we know that glory, like knowledge, "puffeth up," and is wont to make those who possess it vain and arrogant towards their fellows.

2. All that we read of her, all that comes down to us of her from Gospel and tradition, impresses us with the profound humility of Mary. Modesty is seen in all her words and actions as they are recorded in the Gospel, for modesty is the garb that clothes an hum-

ble heart. Although she is often spoken of as accompanying her Divine Son in His journeyings and preachings, and must undoubtedly have formed the central figure of that group of holy men and women who surrounded Him; yet do we hear her words repeated only four times in the Gospels, and these words appear veiled in deepest modesty and humility.

Take, for instance, her words and conduct at the Visitation. At the voice of her salutation the aged Elizabeth is lifted in prophecy, and, filled with the Holy Ghost, cries out with a loud voice: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb; and whence this honor to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" Mary in reply gives utterance to the humblest sentiments. Unlike Lucifer, the light-bearer of old, who foolishly extinguished his light in complacency at his own brightness, and who, far from acknowledging his dependence on God's bounty, ambitioned to be like God Himself, Mary rejoices in God alone and acknowledges that all her greatness is from Him. "Thou dost magnify me, venerable cousin, and dost rejoice in my Visitation; but my soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Saviour. For He hath looked down on the humility of His handmaid. May His name be blessed and glorified. And He who is mighty hath done great things to me, so great, that from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed; and thus His mercy is shown from generation to generation to them that fear Him."

3. Again, when the evangelist describes the number of those who returned from the Mount of Olives, and who persevered in prayer in expectation of the coming of the Holy Ghost; do we read of any preeminence that Mary assumed by reason of the prerogative of her maternity, or the privilege of her sanctity? Does he name her first, in the place where we should naturally expect to find her? "Peter and Andrew," he says, "James and John, and the others who followed. All these persevered, together with the women, and Mary, the Mother of Jesus."

"And is it so," cried out St. Bernard, "that she showed herself the last of the women, that she should be placed the last of all? Admirable indeed is Mary's humility, who, by how much the greater she is, by so much the more should she humble herself, not only before all, but beyond all. Rightly is she made the Queen of all, who was willing to make herself the servant of all. And with reason is she raised above the angels, who bowed with ineffable humility beneath widows and penitents, beneath her from whom were cast out seven devils."

4. Strive for the attainment of this virtue, my brethren. If you desire to please and honor her, imitate her humility. There is nothing more pleasing in a man; there is nothing more becoming in a Christian, there is nothing more dear to the Mother of Him who said: "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart." This virtue has always been the distinguishing mark of the servants of Mary. We are

told that St. Francis of Assisi used to call it by the endearing name of sister. And St. Augustine teaches that it is the beginning, the increase, and the perfection of all virtues. For, as "pride goeth before a fall," so humility is the groundwork and the guardian of all the virtues. And the Psalmist says that, whereas, "God looks upon the proud from afar," that is, keeps them at a distance from Him, "His eyes are ever turned towards the meek and humble." And, again: "He lifteth up the poor man from the dunghill," that is, the man with the humble opinion and esteem of himself; such a one he lifteth up from the dunghill; and because of his humility "placeth him with the princes of His Kingdom." And Mary in her canticle proclaims: "He hath exalted the humble. He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart. He hath filled the needy with good things, and the rich He hath sent away empty."

Be humble, therefore, dearly beloved. If you would be truly devoted to Mary, practise her virtues. Have a low esteem of your own qualities and acknowledge that all excellence is from God. And that you may be truly humble, practise the works of humility; for humility, being a moral virtue, is acquired and strengthened by the repetition of its acts.

Thus will you possess the first quality of true clients of Mary, and draw down on yourselves the shield of her love and complacency, and will merit to be numbered among her children here and her associates in the Kingdom of Heaven.

III

Our Devotion to Mary Must be Tender

1. The second virtue we must cultivate in the practice of devotion to Mary is love. We must love her as the child loves its parent, and respond to the deep and abiding affection she feels towards us as our most tender mother.

It would appear to be a principle in human affairs that love cannot be without suffering, and wherever a true union of hearts exists, there is sorrow and trial. And, indeed, if we reflect on the objects of our affection, we shall find that those that cost us most in their acquirement are the ones that are dearest to us and that we cling to with greatest tenacity.

What love more tender than that which a mother has for her weakly child, on whom she expended so much suffering? Mary, our Mother, loves us tenderly; for in pain and sorrow she brought us forth on Calvary. And, indeed, what anguish could compare with her's when she beheld her Son transfixed with the soldier's lance and His life-blood issuing from His open side? To the letter was fulfilled the prophecy of the ancient Simeon: "This Child shall be raised up for a sign to be contradicted . . . and thy own soul the sword shall pierce." And the sword did pierce her soul at the foot of the Cross. For only by passing through it could it touch the Body of her Son.

And more piercing even than the sword were those words of the Saviour on Calvary, when He gave us to

her to be her children: "Woman, behold thy son." "Oh, astonishing bargain," cries out St. Bernard; "John is given for Jesus—the servant for the Lord—the disciple for the Master—the son of Zebedee for the Son of God." Did not the hearing of those words pierce her most affectionate soul, since even the mere repetition of them tears open our iron breasts?

Be not surprised that Mary is styled "Queen of Martyrs," for only by suffering the pangs of the most cruel martyrdom did she become our Mother on Calvary; and, therefore, are we the more dear to her by how much the more the giving us birth has cost her.

2. And tender also must be our love for Mary, and cling to her we should with the most endearing affection. When dangers threaten us and temptations surround us on every side; to whom should we fly but to her? See the little child when it is threatened with danger, how it flies to its mother's arms and looks up to her for protection! Thus should we, when in danger, fly to Mary as to the fondest of mothers, and the most powerful of protectors.

And Mary is very powerful, for God has made her so. God is the source of all grace and strength. Mary is the channel through which every grace must flow to us. She is the strength of all who conquer and are saved—the perseverance of all who gain the crown of life. If the martyr confesses his faith in the midst of torments; if the confessor perseveres in fidelity to God and spends his life in the practice of every virtue; if the virgin preserves her chastity and keeps

her soul pure for the nuptials of the Lamb; this is all, all, through Mary. In a word, if we desire to be saved; if we wish to lead a Christian life; if we propose to abstain from sin and to become the children of God; devotion to Mary must sink deep into our souls. We must cherish confidence and respect for her, till it becomes to us as natural as to breathe. We must fly to her in all trials and dangers, and look up to her as the one guiding star of our lives, our helper in all the trials that assail us.

THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

"*Behold this Heart that hath loved men so much that it spared nothing even to the emptying of itself to gain their love.*" (*Our Lord's words to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque.*)

I

1. It has pleased Almighty God to bring into prominence before the Church at different periods of her history now one, now another, great object of religious veneration. And this He has done, as well for the purpose of deepening our faith in the mysteries of religion, as of enriching divine worship by the addition of fresh objects of devotion. The bringing into prominence those objects of veneration at these special times was calculated, moreover, to correct some evil tendency of the age, or to counter some influence that was drawing the hearts of men away from piety and virtue.

This purpose we recognize in the veneration called forth in the early ages of the Church for our Lord's sacred Person: or, later on, for that of His holy Mother. This we recognize again in the devotion elicited in the Middle Ages towards the mysteries of the Passion, and, to come to more modern times, towards many other objects you are acquainted with.

Now one of the great objects of the veneration of the faithful in our own times, and one of the most attractive and richest in graces, is the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This great object of our veneration I would direct your attention to to-day as a preparation for the worthy celebration of the coming festival.

2. I need not enter into the history of the spread of the devotion to the Sacred Heart; nor into the circumstances of its origin, which, you are aware, took place some three hundred years ago. Let me rather put before you the doctrine of the devotion itself, and the claims which our Blessed Saviour's Heart has upon our love and veneration.

By devotion to the Sacred Heart we mean, in the first place, the veneration paid to the material Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Heart that beat within the bosom of the Saviour when on earth, and which was pierced for us on the Cross; the Heart which loves us still and is present substantially in the Sacrament of Love, the Holy Eucharist. The Heart of Jesus is, then, the *material object* of the devotion.

By devotion to the Sacred Heart we mean, in the second place, the homage paid to the Heart of Jesus as the symbol of God's love for us, and as the human instrument of that love. The love of God for us is, then, the *spiritual object* of the devotion. These two objects, the material Heart of Jesus, and the love of God for us, make up the *ensemble* of the devotion.

3. But what, you will say, are the claims of the

Sacred Heart to be the object of our special love and veneration?

The claims of the Sacred Heart to be the object of our love and veneration are many and compelling.

First, it is the Heart of our God. This comes as the primary result of the hypostatic union of the Sacred Humanity with the Godhead in Jesus Christ. From this it follows that divine homage must be paid to that Humanity; and even as we pay to the human body, a material thing, and as such allied to the bodies of the brutes, a special honor, because of its participation in our humanity and of its union with the soul; so there is due to the Sacred Humanity of the Man-God, though a created thing and derived from a human mother, supreme worship and veneration, such as is paid to the Godhead alone.

This homage, I would have you observe, is due not only to the Sacred Humanity in general and as a whole, but to everything that pertains to that Humanity, and this not by reason of mere concomitance, or as an accompaniment of that Humanity; but on its own account, because each part of the Sacred Humanity, if we can so divide it, leans immediately on the Godhead, and is united to it by the hypostatic or substantial union. Special attributes of that Humanity, such as the Soul of Christ, His Body as a whole, or, even parts of that Body, as e. g., the Sacred Heart, the Precious Blood, the Holy Face, have been accorded that homage, and to them is due what is called the supreme worship of *latria*.

Again, we should love and venerate the Sacred Heart for that it is, on the one hand, the symbol of the eternal love of God for us, and, on the other, the human organ of that love. The Sacred Heart is the symbol of the love of God for us. At all times and among all peoples the heart has been regarded as the seat of the affections, from which, as from their proper source and fountain, flow all those emotions of love and tenderness that we have for others. And hence, among all peoples the heart has been held as the symbol of love. Our Lord's Heart is, then, the symbol of God's love for us. It is, moreover, the human instrument of that love, the sacred channel through which is poured out upon the human race the immense love of the Redeemer. This being so, I say we should love and venerate the Heart of our Divine Lord because it hath first loved us. And this is also the reason why we are called on in Scripture to love our Lord Jesus Christ. "Dearly beloved," says St. John, "let us love our Lord Jesus Christ." Why? "Because He hath first loved us." "He hath first loved us"; that is to say, the Sacred Heart hath first loved us.

See, my brethren, how much there is contained in that short sentence of the Apostle, "He hath first loved us." It reminds us that there was a time when we were all enemies of God, and when coldness, indifference, and hatred of God reigned in the human heart, and, as a result of this hatred, the whole human race was doomed to perdition. What was to be done in order that man might be reconciled with his Creator, and

that, where hatred and sin had abounded, grace and love might abound the more?

Shall man offer hecatombs of victims to bring about that reconciliation? Ah, brethren, the bodies of sheep and oxen and the firstfruits of the soil are, after all, but poor offerings with which to appease an outraged God. He Himself declares by the mouth of the Psalmist that He will no longer accept them. "Sacrifice and oblation Thou dost not desire, O God; peace-offerings and offerings for sin do not please Thee." What then? But at that instant a voice is heard from the throne of the Godhead itself. "A Body fitted for suffering and sacrifice Thou hast given Me. . . . Then, said I, behold I am ready to do Thy will, O God." It was the voice of the Son of God, preluding the Incarnation, and offering Himself to the Eternal Father as the victim of atonement for the sins of the world. The Eternal Father accepts the sacrifice. And behold, when the fullness of time is come, the Divine Word assumes human nature and is made man. "A Body Thou hast fitted to me." And while men "know not who is in the midst of them," the tiny Heart beats in the bosom of the Babe of Bethlehem, with a love that goes out to all generations of mankind.

O brethren, contemplate that spectacle. The Saviour is but a Child. He cannot yet pronounce articulate speech; and yet He embraces the whole race of man, with the fond embrace of love. Who, then, that would not love and venerate the Sacred Heart of Jesus which hath first loved us?

II

1. The love of the Sacred Heart for us is a constant love. This we see as we study the life of Jesus. He loved us as a Child, and conferred favors on all who approached Him, and, as He grew into manhood, it was love for us that impelled Him to go forth on His public mission announcing the glad tidings of salvation to men, and lavishing on them His favors and graces. For, as He says: "I am come to cast fire on the earth," the fire of holy love, "and what will I, but that it be kindled?" Hence so many efforts of the Saviour to awaken a corresponding flame in the hearts of men.

It was this love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for us that induced Him to undergo for our sakes all the sufferings and humiliations of His Passion. O brethren, what an incentive to love on our part, the meditation on the different scenes of that great tragedy by which was wrought the Redemption of the world? Who can contemplate, first of all, that scene in the garden of Gethsemani, wherein we see our loving Saviour enter on His Passion? In that bitter struggle He allows Himself to be laden with such an excess of sorrow that He is constrained to cry out: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death!" and "O Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me." And in that bitterest of agonies the Precious Blood surges in the Sacred Heart, till at last, with a mighty effort, it issues out at every pore, drenches His garments, and falls in great drops to the ground. Is not this paying the tribute of sacrifice to love? and has not the Sacred Heart

by that one night of intensest sorrow earned our everlasting gratitude and love?

2. But the tragedy ends not here. And as, on the morrow of that night of anguish, we ascend the hill of Calvary, what a spectacle meets our view!

O my brethren, how can we remain unmoved when even the very heavenly bodies veil themselves in mourning for their suffering Lord? Are our hearts more insensible than the rocks that are split in anguish? And why do not our eyes stream with tears at the contemplation of that portentous spectacle? A God lifted on the infamous wood and worried to death by a vile rabble! A God with His hands and feet dug through with nails! A God wearing on His Head a crown of thorns! A God doomed to death by those whom He had laden with all kind of benefits! *Our* God stretched on the altar of the cross, a Victim of atonement for our sins!

And as we gaze upon that spectacle, what do we behold? The sacred side opened with the soldier's spear and the adorable Heart riven in twain in order to show that He spared nothing for love of us and that He might gain for us a plenteous Redemption by the shedding of every drop of His Precious Blood.

O my brethren, look upon that wounded side. It is the entrance opened for us to the Sacred Heart. Enter into that noble mansion where you shall find all manner of delights. Take up your dwelling in those glorious halls which are sufficiently capacious to accommodate the whole human race. "You shall there be inebriated with the plenty of God's house, and drink

of the torrent of His pleasures." Enter in and fear not. It is the Saviour Himself who invites you. "Come to Me all you that labor and are heavily burdened, and I will refresh you."

3. But the love of the Sacred Heart for us ends not even here. Ah, no! for the faithful lover ever seeks new means of benefiting his beloved. The Saviour Himself would seem to have determined the limits to which love can go when, on the evening of His Passion, He said to His disciples: "Greater love than this no man hath, that he should lay down his life for his friends." Ah, true it is, but the loving inventions of a God can find out a means whereby He can benefit us even after death has removed from us His visible presence.

Do I speak, dearly beloved brethren, of the adorable institution of the Eucharist, in which our loving Lord left us His own most Precious Body and Blood to be our food and our constant ever-abiding source of benefits? Yes, here in this humble tabernacle, we have the same Lord who once offered Himself for us on the Cross. That same Heart that was pierced with the soldier's lance is here also beating for us with the same intense, everlasting love. It is in this humble dwelling-place to hear the cry of our distress and to sympathize with us in our sorrows. It is here to receive our homage and to demand those acts of veneration which are its due.

III

And what return do we make to the Heart of Jesus for such an outpouring of love? Oh, the cold, stark in-

difference with which we treat our loving Lord, after all His benefits to us; and the irreverence we offer Him in the Sacrament of His love! "Poor Jesus Christ," as a pious writer of our day (Faber) speaks pathetically of Him, "Poor Jesus Christ"; no one thinks of Him: no one loves Him. Well do we deserve the reproach our Lord Himself made through the faithful apostle of the Sacred Heart, St. Margaret Mary. "Behold, this Heart that has loved men so much that it spared nothing even to the emptying of itself to gain their love. And, yet, I receive nothing from the greater part in return but coldness, neglect, indifference, and irreverence." "But, what grieves Me most," He continues, "is the disregard shown Me by hearts specially consecrated to Me." "What grieves Me most!" Cannot each one of us take this complaint as specially addressed to himself? For are we not all consecrated children of the Sacred Heart? You especially, who are members of the Sacred Heart sodality, is not this appeal addressed to you?

How is it, then, that we think so seldom of this Divine Heart? How is it we are so indifferent to the solemn promises made by us? Hear again the complaint made by that Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. "What grieves Me most is the disregard shown Me by hearts specially consecrated to Me."

Dearly beloved, let us all, on this blessed day, fall down on our knees and renew once again our vows of devotion to the Sacred Heart. Let us consecrate ourselves anew to this Divine Lover, and commend to Him ourselves, our families, our lands, our labors, our

city and our country. Let us pledge ourselves once more to devote ourselves heart and soul to the cause of honoring and making loved the Sacred Heart, and to be its devoted children till death.

"My Lord, Jesus Christ, I adore Thee, ever present on this altar. I thank Thee for all Thy favors and mercies. I give Thee special thanks for Thy great mercy in making me Thy child and a member of Thy Church through the Sacrament of Baptism. With deep and heartfelt sorrow I grieve over and confess the many great sins by which I have offended Thee and broken the promises I made at the baptismal font. I now heartily repent of all my transgressions, and promise sincere amendment. Grant Me, O Lord Jesus Christ, the grace henceforth to lead a true Christian life, and to be till death a loyal servant and lover of Thy Sacred Heart. Amen."

THE ASSUMPTION

"Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come. For the winter is now past; the rain is over and gone; the flowers have appeared in our land. . . . Arise, make haste, my love, and come from Libanus; come: thou shalt be crowned from the top of Emana and from the top of Sanir and Hermon." (*Cant. ii, 10–12.*)

I

1. Save the triumph of our Divine Lord on the day of His Ascension, there never was, and there never will be, a triumph like that of the Blessed Virgin on the day of her Assumption. In the one, the Eternal Word, clothed in our nature, after having accomplished the work of our Redemption by His labors, suffering, and death, enters into His glory is seated on the right hand of the Eternal Father; and is constituted Sovereign Master of the universe and Supreme Judge of the living and dead. In the other, the Mother of the same Word Incarnate, having perfectly corresponded to all the great designs of God upon her, having acquired immense merits by the practice of all the virtues, and having arrived at the summit of perfection, is assumed body and soul into Heaven; takes possession of the throne of glory which

is due to her; and is crowned Queen of Heaven and earth, of angels and of men.

It is to commemorate this triumph of our Blessed Mother and to share in her greatness, her elevation and her glory, that we are assembled here to-day. For if the honor of parents descends upon their children, as the Wise Man tells us it does; what glory for us, what a subject of joy and consolation to see our Mother raised to so high a pitch of glory! What a subject of confidence to boot! The Blessed Virgin was raised to the supreme throne, which she possesses, not for her own advantage merely, but for that of her children also, and in order to make us feel the effects of her powerful protection.

Let us rejoice, then, with the whole Church on this grand and consoling solemnity. Let us make our temples resound with the praises of the incomparable Virgin. Let earth and Heaven ring with the praises of her whom all created beings look upon as their Queen. And it is in order that we, in our own little way, may participate in the general festivity, that I dedicate my discourse to-day to the praise of the ever Blessed Mother.

2. I begin by laying down this self-evident truth—that it is only grace and the friendship of God in this world and eternal glory in the next that renders men truly great and glorious. All greatness without these is only folly and baseness. Hence, those births which people style illustrious ought to be considered rather a subject of shame and confusion, since they are accompanied with original sin. All natural gifts, all

goods of fortune, all riches, all honors, all talents, all perfections of mind and body, when separated from grace, become not only useless, but hurtful, and so many instruments of crime.

All this being presupposed as incontestable, we must conclude that the Blessed Virgin Mary is truly great; since all her greatness is founded on grace in this life and the immense glory which she enjoys in eternity.

Let us trace her career step by step in the principal events of her life, and this truth will shine out with ever-increasing brilliancy. And first, as to her sinless Conception. At the moment of her Immaculate Conception she was enriched with all celestial gifts, the most precious, the most holy. She possessed a perfect faith, a firm hope, an ardent charity, a profound humility, a purity superior to that of the angels. It was of her the prophet had sung when he said that in her very beginning, "the foundations of her virtue were laid on the summit of the holy mountains." No stain of original sin ever sullied the immaculate purity of her soul, and it was this particular privilege that separated Mary from all the other children of Adam. She was the only one who was exempt from the universal curse fallen on the human race; and that might be said of her which King Assuerus said of his wife Esther: "This law was made for all others, but not for you."

Mary, according to the interpreters of Scripture, is that mysterious cloud shown to the Prophet Elias, which, though it rose out of the sea, yet had contracted

none of the bitterness of its waters. "She is a rose sprung from the thorny stem" of our humanity. "The Lord possessed her in the very beginning of her ways," and she was never under the power of the serpent, whose head she came to crush in giving a Redeemer to the world. And hence the Spouse in the Canticles is never wearied with singing the praises of her charms. "Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee. As the lily among the thorns, so is my love among the daughters. How beautiful thou art, my love, how beautiful thou art. Thy cheeks are fair as the turtle dove's; thy neck, as jewels; thy voice is sweet; thy face is comely. One is my dove, my perfect one is but one. Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, brilliant as the sun, terrible as an army set in battle array! The daughters of Sion saw her and called her blest, and the queens declared her praises; and as the days of Spring they shed around her flowers of roses and lilies of the valleys."

3. But illustrious as was the Conception of Mary, her birth was an event no less illustrious. I could recount many glorious circumstances in connection with her visible advent among men. I could say that Mary was great according to the world's notions; since she was descended from the most renowned men in all antiquity; since she counted among her ancestors patriarchs, prophets, judges, chiefs of the people of God, and kings of the ancient law.

But let us confine ourselves to supernatural advantages only, and say that her birth was a prodigy of

God's power, where nature performed only a secondary part. It was from a sterile mother and one, moreover, beyond the age of child-bearing, through the miraculous intervention of God, that this incomparable Virgin sprung. Her birth was represented beforehand by many figures, announced by prophets, desired for many ages by the human race, and prayed for with much ardor. Her's was a birth awaited as the near sign of the deliverance of the human race, and it was this that made the Church regard Mary as the rising dawn—a very natural comparison. For as the dawn precedes and announces the coming of the sun, dissipates the darkness of the night, drives away the wild beasts to their lairs, consoles the sick, and rejoices all nature; so Mary went before and introduced Jesus Christ, the "Sun of Justice," who dissipated the darkness of error from the world by the light of His gospel; chased away the wild beasts, that is to say, the devils; consoled and cured the spiritually sick, and brought an abundance of blessings on the whole world.

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II

1. From the consideration of her birth we are led on to the consideration of her divine maternity, which was the source and principle, the cause and end of all her glory. Here it is that our thoughts lose themselves in admiration. Here it is we come upon an ocean and an abyss, where the mind of man sees nothing. It is true to say that the maternity of the Most Blessed Virgin is a mystery no less incomprehensible than is that of

the Incarnation of her Son. In fact Mary, by that great and prodigious event, became the Mother of a Son, almighty, eternal, immense, infinite in all perfection; of a Son who possessed the same divinity as the Father and the Holy Ghost. By it she contracted a most strict alliance with the adorable Trinity, being made the daughter of the Father, the Mother of the Son, the Spouse of the Holy Ghost. By it she acquired a maternal superiority over Him who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. By it she contained in her bosom Him in whom are contained all things visible and invisible. By it she became a mother without ceasing to be a virgin, and her happy fecundity only consecrated and increased her purity. By it she sees herself raised incomparably above all the saints and all the elect of God; above angels and archangels; above thrones, dominations, principalities, powers, cherubim, and seraphim. For she acknowledges above her only the Godhead and the Sacred Humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

By this admirable maternity she is become cooperator in the Redemption of the human race. For it was she who nourished and prepared the holy Victim, who was offered to the Eternal Father in expiation of our sins. From her were derived the Precious Blood which was shed upon the cross for our salvation, and the adorable Body which, after having been made the price of our Redemption, is become the nourishment of our souls in the Holy Eucharist. See to what a height of glory Mary is raised by the mystery of the divine maternity. The Fathers of the Church,

considering this supreme greatness, seem lost for words to express their thoughts. And even the Church cannot find terms strong enough to express her admiration. She says, in the words of the Canticles, that she is "chosen as the sun," "comely as Jerusalem," "the perfect one of the Beloved." She assures us that Mary is the woman whom John saw in heaven, "clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars." She calls her a "mirror of justice," "seat of wisdom," a "vessel of honor of inestimable value," "ark of the covenant," "gate of heaven," "our life, our refuge, and our hope."

2. The Assumption of Mary into Heaven and her solemn coronation have sealed her greatness. It was on this day, according to a venerable tradition of the Church, that this Divine Mother, laden with graces and merits, was transported into Heaven. The Spouse, stricken with her gifts, bids her to the heavenly court, saying to her in the words of the Canticles: "Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come. For the winter is now past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers have appeared in our land. The flowering vines have given forth their sweet smell; the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. Arise, make haste, my love and come; come from Libanus, my spouse; come. Thou shalt be crowned from the top of Emana; and from the top of Sanir and Hermon"; from those unfrequented heights, where are the dens of the lions and the lairs of the leopards. Who can form a just idea of that superb triumph? Angels in myriad numbers come to escort her. She is borne aloft

to the palace of her Beloved. She passes amid the different choirs and orders of the blessed, above hierarchy after hierarchy of the celestial spirits, and advances towards the throne of light prepared for her. Her adorable Son comes to meet her and welcomes her with serene joy. She is crowned by the Blessed Trinity and constituted Queen of Heaven, advocate of the human race, and dispenser of the graces of the Redemption.

What songs of gladness on the part of the elect! What jubilee of triumph throughout the whole celestial court! Transported with astonishment they exclaim: "Who is she that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning on her Beloved?" "Who is she that goeth up by the desert as a pillar of smoke of aromatic spices, of myrrh, and frankincense, and all the powders of the perfumer?" "Beautiful is she, the love of the Beloved, sweet and comely as Jerusalem."

Such was the triumph of Mary on the day of her Assumption and Coronation; and such do we, her children, contemplate her to-day. She is shown to us "ruddy as the dawn," in the gladness of hope with which she suffuses all creation; "fair as the moon," in the peerless beauty of her unfallen nature; "brilliant as the sun," in the glory of her divine maternity; "terrible as an army set in battle array," in the cause of righteousness and truth, and to repel the assaults of the devil. She is shown us with "the moon under her feet," i. e., the protector and guardian of the universal Church; "crowned with twelve stars," which are

so many prerogatives of grace; nay, "clothed with the sun." And even as she at the Incarnation clothed the Eternal Word with the vesture of our humanity; so now she is clothed by God with the vesture of divinity. For she penetrates into the most profound abyss of the Divine Wisdom; and as far as the condition of a creature admits, without personal union, is immersed in the inaccessible light of the Godhead.

THE HAIL MARY

"Hail, full of grace! the Lord is with thee. Blessed art Thou among women." (*Luke i, 28.*)

I

1. The "Lord's Prayer" is a prayer that comes to us from Heaven, having been given us by the Son of God Himself. It is the holiest prayer that we can address to our Heavenly Father. Hence, from one end of the world to the other, it is daily on the lips of Christians. What graces will not this beautiful prayer obtain for us, and what happy fruits of salvation will it not produce in us, if it is offered to God through the hands of His Blessed Mother?

It is for this reason, no doubt, that everywhere and almost always the "Our Father" is followed by the "Hail Mary." Let me occupy myself in this instruction in telling you what sanctifying words it is composed of, and what is its signification.

The "Hail Mary" is so called from the words with which it begins. They are the words the angel employed in announcing to Mary that she would be the Mother of God. It is made up of three parts. The first part comes, as I have said, from the angel Gabriel. These are his words: "Hail, full of grace; the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women."

The second part was spoken by St. Elizabeth, who said to Mary: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb."

The third part is a prayer which the Church adds, and which commences with these words: "Holy Mary, Mother of God," words by which the Church, united in the council of Ephesus, crushed the heresiarch, Nestorious, who dared to refuse to Mary the glorious title of "Mother of God."

2. It is, then, a fitting prayer, and the words that compose it, are come out of the mouths of beings the most holy. Yes, my brethren, and there are none by which we can better praise, bless, and invoke the Blessed Virgin.

In fact, how could we praise the Blessed Virgin in a manner more agreeable than by addressing her in the words she heard for the first time from the mouth of the angel when he came to announce to her the marvels which the Most High was about to operate in her, and which raised her to the highest point of glory and grandeur? Can we better bless the Mother of God than by recalling the adorable mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, and in repeating the words of St. Elizabeth: "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb"?

My brethren, these words of thanksgiving open to us the heart of Mary and lead us naturally to address to her a petition which can only be agreeable to her, and which is found in the words: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death."

II

1. Let us see now what are the holy truths inshrined in the words of which the "Hail Mary" is composed. The angel Gabriel calls Mary "full of grace." What is the signification of those beautiful words? They teach us that Mary received from God, she alone, more graces than all creatures together. They teach us that God, after having chosen Mary from among all the daughters of Sion to be the mother of His beloved Son, enriched her with His gifts, loaded her with favors, and opened for her all the treasures of His bounty. "Many daughters have amassed riches; but were all their acquisitions put together, they cannot be compared to thine." They share in the graces of the Saviour; but thou, O Mary, art full of them: "The Lord is with thee."

It is true, we are all temples where God dwells, and if we are in the state of grace, it can be said to us also, "The Lord is with thee." But He was in Mary in a manner altogether special. It was in her that He wished to take flesh and to become man. He is in the heart of Mary. He fills all her understanding. He possesses her whole will. He is the source of all her thoughts, of all the movements, of all the sentiments of her heart and soul, and He permits not that there mingle the least stain that can tarnish her purity. Yes, Mary, "the Lord is with thee."

The messenger of God adds: "Blessed art thou among women." Of all the women who appeared on earth since the beginning of the world, of all the

women who shall appear on earth till the end of time, Mary is the most worthy and the most holy, the highest in grace and glory before God. She is the sole one out of the family of Adam who was conceived without sin. Never did sin, even the slightest, touch this beautiful soul, the living temple of God, where the eye of God cannot discover the least stain. Sanctuary of all the virtues, the heart of Mary was full of faith, hope, charity, humility, purity. And from the day of her entrance into the world to the hour of her leaving it, Mary ceased not a single instant to go from virtue to virtue, and grow in perfection and sanctity.

Lastly, holy Virgin, not only art thou of all the daughters of Sion the strongest, the most chaste, the most faithful, the most holy, but thou art the Mother of the Saviour of the world, the Mother of God. With what reason then may not the angel say to thee: "Blessed art thou among women"?

St. Elizabeth says also to Mary: "Blessed art thou among women," and she adds: "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb." This was because the Holy Ghost had revealed to the venerable spouse of Zachary that the "heavens had dropped down the divine dew, and the clouds had rained the Just One," that "the desired of nations" was before her in the virginal womb of Mary. Jesus, Saviour of the world; Jesus, Angel of Peace, and true Solomon; Jesus is the fruit of thy womb, O Mary!

Without doubt thou hast all power over His heart, and He hastens to hear the desires and prayers which thou layest at His feet in Heaven. It is for this reason

that the Church of thy Divine Son wishes that we say to thee daily, with a confidence without bounds: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death."

2. "Holy Mary," our Lady, our Queen, beloved daughter of Sion, who hast been filled by the Holy Ghost, who hast conceived in thy womb the Son of the Eternal God, who hast given Him the Body which He will sacrifice, and the Blood which He will shed for us; "Mother of God," employ in our favor the power of mercy with which the Lord clothed thee; "Pray for us, poor sinners" thou who lovest the titles of "Refuge of Sinners" and "Help of Christians"; thou who art the star placed over this tempest-tossed world to lead us to the port of salvation. Consider our miseries, and thy motherly heart will be moved. Thou wilt pray for us to thy Divine Son. Thy prayer will be heard, and our salvation will be the fruit of thy suppliant, but all-powerful intercession.

Pray for us "now," that is, always, at each instant; for at each instant we have need of thy help, O Mother of God. In fact, my brethren, we have unceasingly new sins to deplore, new weaknesses to be remedied, new dangers to avoid, new duties to fulfill, and consequently, new graces to obtain through the intercession of this Mother of mercy.

May Mary, then, pray for us poor sinners, now, ever, and always, but above all, "at the hour of our death," so that we may not be troubled by the fear of death, and by the temptations of the devil, who at that

decisive moment redoubles his efforts, employs all his ruses, and uses all his malice to destroy us.

May Mary pray for us that we may bear our trials and sufferings with a Christian and meritorious patience, that we may receive worthily the Last Sacraments, sources of grace and pardon, and pledges of salvation, that we may preserve the spirit of penitence and contrition, of confidence in God, and resignation to His holy will; so that, persevering in grace and firm in His love, we may merit to be received into Heaven.

3. Mary is very pleasing to the heart of God the Father, of God the Son, of God the Holy Ghost. Mary is very powerful. She is the Mother of God. She wishes our happiness. She wishes to conduct us to God. Pray to this holy Virgin. Address to her often this beautiful salutation of the archangel, which I have explained to you. Recite it, my brethren, in your sorrows, and you will be consoled; in temptations, and you will be strengthened. Recite it daily, especially in the morning and evening.

Christians of every age and state, but above all, you, young people, who feel so many and violent temptations, pray to Mary, and Mary will pray for you; and the succor of God will be given to you. You will do what God commands, and you will go one day to glorify Him in Heaven, in the society of the angels and saints, and Mary, the Mother of Jesus.

THE ROSARY

I

1. It was an occasion of great joy to all the inhabitants of Judea when Judith cut off the head of Holofernes, the Assyrian general, and sent his army fleeing among the hills. And the event was celebrated with songs of jubilee and thanksgiving by all the people. And Eliachim, the high priest, came up from Jerusalem to Bettulia with all the ancients to take part in the festivities, and he with them praised the heroine, saying: "Thou art the glory of Jerusalem; thou art the joy of Israel; thou art the honor of thy people. Thou hast done manfully, and thy heart hath been strengthened, because thou hast loved chastity, . . . and, therefore, thou shalt be blessed forever."

Somewhat of the joy and triumph that stirred in the breasts of the Bettulians on their deliverance at the hands of this incomparable woman is awakened in the church to-day when we commemorate the deliverance of Christendom from the hateful tyranny of the Turk by the ever-glorious Virgin Mary.

It, too, was a great and momentous occasion. The barbarous hordes of Soliman, the Moslem emperor, had already laid waste the whole eastern world, had profaned the holy places of Judea, and were now pre-

paring for the conquest of Europe, which they threatened to deluge in Christian blood; when they were overthrown and their power forever put in check at the hands of a woman greater than Judith, and at the prayers of her children, the members of the Rosary confraternities of Italy, at the head of whom we recognize, walking barefooted and in tears, the venerable Pontiff, Pope Pius V, the worthy son of Dominic of the Rosary.

Shall we not, then, on this solemn day of commemoration of the monumental victory of Lepanto, salute our mother, the Queen of the Holy Rosary, in words of praise reminiscent of those of Eliachim and the ancients; "Thou art the glory of the heavenly Jerusalem, by the perfection of thy being flowing with graces and benedictions. Thou art the joy of the Church, the true Israel of God, by the hope thou infusest into all who have recourse to thee. Thou art the honor of our people, even the whole human race, for thou art the one unfallen specimen of our humanity who to-day exists in the sight of God and His angels! And when the Almighty looks down on the countless armies of the saints thou alone comest up to the perfect ideal He conceived of thee at thy creation. Mother and Queen of the Holy Rosary, thou hast done manfully, thou who from the beginning hast overthrown all heresies, as the Church sings of thee. Thy heart has been strengthened, because thou hast loved chastity in a pre-eminent degree, O incomparable Virgin, and therefore thou shalt be blessed of all forever!"

2. And now, since the great object of this solem-

nity is to praise and thank God for the glorious victory gained over the infidel through the Rosary, it is opportune to consider the origin, and terminology, and composition, and qualities of this prayer, so popular and widespread among Christians, and so esteemed by saints and popes and theologians since its introduction into the Church many centuries ago?

Well, dearly beloved, a tradition going back many centuries tells us that the Rosary was first given to the world through St. Dominic, the founder of the Friars Preachers, by the holy Mother of God herself. For the saint, being despondent at the ill success of his missionary labors among the heretics of Southern France, prayed with tears to her who is the help of Christians; and she appeared to him, radiant with glory, and gave him the Rosary beads, saying: "Preach my Rosary, it will be a remedy against all those evils that afflict the Church." And Dominic and his companions preached the Rosary, and the Dominicans have preached the Rosary for the past seven hundred years, with what result a benefited and grateful Church has never ceased to tell.

3. As it is not unusual in the terminology of the Church, the name, itself poetic, graceful, and full of mysteries, symbolizes its characteristics and calls upon a most pleasing picture to the imagination. For "rosary" is a word employed by the writers of antiquity to designate a place planted with rose trees and covered with roses. From the classical languages the word has passed into the language of the Church, and is applied actually to the devotion I speak of—a de-

votion which has for its object to honor our Lord and the most Holy Virgin by the recitation of fifteen "Our Fathers" and as many decades of the Angelic Salutation, and the meditation on the principal mysteries of Christianity.

The application is not unfitting. For just as the rose is the queen of flowers, so is the Rosary the most excellent of prayers. Moreover, as a plantation of roses charms us with variety and harmony of color, whilst at the same time it fills the air with a delicious perfume, even so the prayer of the Rosary gives forth perfume and color through the mysteries which it offers for our reflection—mysteries which are the chief articles of our faith.

II

1. Let us analyze its elements. And first, as to the prayers or vocal element, as it is called, of the Rosary. They consist of the "Our Father," the prayer taught us by the lips of our Lord Himself—a prayer which in its seven petitions, as by so many fiery arrows, wounds the heart of God and moves Him to grant our requests. In the first three petitions we beg our Heavenly Father for the things that concern His own glory. We beg, namely, that His name may be glorified; that He would always reign over us; that His will be done here on earth, even as it is fulfilled by the angels and saints in Heaven. We petition Him for the daily nourishment of our souls, grace and His holy word; but especially for the food of the most Holy

Eucharist; for the forgiveness of our sins; to be delivered from temptation; and from all evils, spiritual and temporal, that afflict us.

After that we recite many times the Hail Mary. This prayer is made up, as you are aware, of the salutation of the Virgin by the angel Gabriel at the Annunciation; of the inspired words of her cousin, St. Elizabeth; and of the invocation of the Church, saluting her by the grandest of her titles. In this prayer we salute with that solemn "Ave" first pronounced by the angelic messenger, her whom he recognized as his future Queen. We salute her as the Virgin, full of grace, full of grace by reason of the inconceivable riches of sanctity with which she was endowed at her Immaculate Conception; full of grace as a result of her wonderful correspondence with grace during her life on earth; full of grace as a preparation for, and as a consequence of, the ineffable dignity to which she has been raised; full of grace by the consummation of her sanctity in Heaven.

We call her blessed among women; for she delivered her people, not as Judith from the sword of the enemy, but from the spiritual thraldom under which the great enemy of souls had captivated the world; and she crushed forever his head by giving a Redeemer to mankind. We invoke her to make intercession with her Divine Son for us now, when, as soldiers on the field of battle, we contend against the enemies of our salvation, but especially at that supreme hour of our existence when our fate will be decided for eternity.

And, lastly, we pronounce the "Glory be to the

Father," etc., a prayer of supreme homage and adoration of God and one reminiscent of the triple "Holy" chanted everlastingly by the four living creatures before the throne of the Lord of Hosts.

2. Have you reflected, dearly beloved, on the deep significance of these prayers? They contain the fundamental truths of our religion on which is built the whole edifice of faith. They proclaim the universal Fatherhood of God: His sovereign dominion; His providence; His mercy; the Incarnation of the Word; the Divine Maternity, the privileges and the power of Mary. They express with a marvelous precision all the wants of nature sanctified by grace—wants of succor; of protection; of reparation; of spiritual and corporal nourishment; of union with God. They praise; they return thanks; they implore help, better than all the hymns and prayers with which the Church has enriched her liturgy.

Meanwhile, these prayers chosen among all suffice not the votaries of the Rosary. By a harmonious combination of interior and exterior acts we add to them in some sort color and perfume by joining to them and penetrating them with reflections on the mysteries pertinent to the life of Jesus Christ and of His most holy Mother. These mysteries are arranged in three orders or categories—the joyful, the sorrowful, and the glorious. The joyful, consider the chief incidents pertaining to the Incarnation and to our Lord's early life; the sorrowful, are devoted to the meditation on His most bitter passion; and the glorious, carry us to the consideration of His triumph over death and hell

and of the rewards conferred on His most holy Mother in return for her life of love and martyrdom. And here again we see the symbolic meaning of the word, Rosary.

The rose has ordinarily but three colors—white, crimson, and gold. White—the color of innocence and of the joys of infancy. Crimson—the color of blood shed in combats of love and sorrow. Gold—the color of glory acquired at the cost of labor and sacrifice. White, crimson, and gold, are the colors which the mysteries, joyful, sorrowful and glorious, on which our mind meditates, give to the prayers of the Rosary. And while Heaven is rejoiced with this charming variety of color, is not our soul penetrated with the perfume which comes out from each mystery? It inhales deep breaths of the beneficent waves and feels developed within it all the virtues. Faith is nourished with the august virtues which come out from the life itself of the Saviour and of His most holy Mother. Hope is nourished with the promises of which the glories of Jesus and Mary are the solemn guarantees. Charity is nourished with the infinite love which is thrown out by the sacrifice of the cross. Humility, chastity, obedience, strength, meekness, resignation, patience, contempt of worldly goods, desire of heavenly ones; all these virtues press in a crowd at the gates of our soul to enter in with a word, a trait, a circumstance.

Our memory, piously solicited, reminds us that Jesus humbled Himself even to taking the form of a servant;

that Mary proclaimed herself to be the handmaid of the Lord; that she preferred chastity to the honor of the Divine Motherhood; that Christ made Himself obedient even to the death on the Cross; that He went before us in opprobrium and allowed Himself to be made as a meek lamb led to the slaughter; that He was put to death unjustly with words of forgiveness on His lips; that He rolled back the stone of His sepulchre and ascended to the right hand of His Father; that He called after Him His Mother; and that both He and she await us to confer on us eternal happiness. O mysteries, with what perfume you embalm our hearts! What delicious odor you communicate to our prayers! And can God Himself refuse those charming and holy flowers of our souls; and roses themselves, are they not worthy to be offered to the "Mystical Rose" during the month which is for her a love festival?

3. See then, dearly beloved, that you esteem at its proper worth this lovely prayer which, as a garden of roses, was planted in the Church by the holy Mother of God herself. Weave chaplets daily of this lovely prayer; chaplets rich in color and perfume by the infusion of true devotion, and present them at the feet of her who is the "Mystical Rose." Nay, my friends, link hands and form a crown of joy to the Blessed Mother by yourselves becoming members of the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary, which is organized in this church, and which, let us hope, will be a perpetual source of edification to the whole parish.

But are we destined to so great an honor? Yes, my friends, for the Rosary as a society may be called once again a place planted with roses.

As among flowers the rose is the first, so is the Rosary among the confraternities of the Blessed Virgin. It is not only the most ancient in its origin; but it is the most illustrious by its reminiscences, the richest by its indulgences and privileges; the most glorious by its influence. Among all it merits to be preferred. And as the petals of the rose, being united in the same cup, receive the same life, exhale the same perfume, circle around a common center, so the members of the Confraternity of the Rosary, being united by the bonds of charity, receiving the same graces, reciting the same prayers, gather around the same mother, Mary.

Joining ourselves then as a living garland around the Queen of Heaven; serving her during life; assimilating the virtues of Jesus and Mary which we daily meditate on in this choicest of prayers; excelling in the beauty of our soul; in the innocence of our life; in the ardor of our charity; in our love of suffering; in the perfection of our prayers; and in the perfume of our virtues; we may expect that God will gather us at death and give us a chosen place in the festivals of eternity, where we shall be forever the crown of Mary.

THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

What was it, Lord, that crimsoned
Life's day at break of morn;
What power dwelt in the waters
When I, Thy child, was born?

What tide is it that laves me
And takes my sins away;
What is it, Lord, that made me
Thy soldier in the fray?

"The Precious Blood I shed for thee
Upon the Hill of Calvary."

I

1. So sang the devout soul, pouring forth the ardors of her heart in accents of burning verse; and her words recall to us how much we owe to the Precious Blood "shed for us upon the hill of Calvary." They remind us again and especially of the mysterious outpourings of the Precious Blood through the channels of the Sacraments, and of its lifegiving and healing effects upon our souls during the period of our pilgrimage here below.

Now it is with the object of making an appeal to you for the practice of devotion to the Precious Blood,

to be shown forth in grateful remembrance of all it has done for us, and of all we ought to do for it in return, that I come before you to-day. First let me lay down the doctrine of the devotion to the Precious Blood.

2. By the devotion to the Precious Blood we are to understand, in the first place, the veneration paid to the Blood of Jesus Christ, our Saviour; the Blood that pulsated within His Heart and vivified His Sacred Body whilst He was on earth. It is the veneration paid to the Blood that still courses through His veins in His sacramental life on our altars, and that pleads powerfully for us before the throne of mercy in Heaven. This, the physical entity of the Blood of Jesus, is thus the material object of the devotion.

By the devotion to the Precious Blood we mean again the worship paid to the everlasting love of God for man, of which the Blood shed for us by Jesus Christ is the symbol. The Precious Blood, then, as the symbol of God's love for us, is the spiritual object of the devotion.

3. The claims of the Precious Blood to be the object of our special love and veneration are paramount; for, in the first place, by reason of the hypostatic union of the Sacred Humanity with the person of the Son of God, the Precious Blood is become divine, and therefore worthy of supreme religious worship.

A second reason why we should love and venerate the Precious Blood is that the shedding of that Blood is the price paid by our Lord for our Redemption, for our delivery from hell, and slavery to the devil.

And it is in this that we see what is distinctive and peculiar in this object of our veneration, inasmuch as it and it alone emancipated us and is the efficient cause of our Redemption.

Lastly, the Blood of Jesus Christ, assumed as drink in Holy Communion, is the life of our souls. And truly, if this vital fluid carried through vein and artery conveys life and healing to the body and gives robustness to the limbs; how much more will not the Blood of Jesus Christ, assumed in Holy Communion, convey supernatural life and energy to the soul, and give earnest of the eternal life to come. And hence the great saying of our Lord: "He that drinketh My Blood abideth in Me and I in him," and "I will raise him up on the last day."

Reciprocating the all-sacrificing love of Jesus Christ for us, and recognizing this threefold claim on our love, we in turn consecrate all our actions and our whole being in furtherance of the aims our Saviour had in view in the Redemption. To this end we labor earnestly to advance God's glory among men, to sanctify ourselves, and to labor zealously for souls perishing in the world.

4. Having undertaken this enterprise, it behooves us to know how this is to be done.

Some think they are ardent votaries of the Precious Blood when, on occasion, they make a novena or recite some prayers and litanies in honor of this object, it may be to obtain a favor or to advance some cause they have at heart; meanwhile the whole orbit of their lives lies outside the circuit which has reference to the

aims and interests of Jesus Christ, and the purposes of His blood-shedding scarcely interest their lives, given over to worldliness and sin. Those are false votaries of the practice, and they are only a little less repulsive to our Lord than His open and declared enemies.

II

1. How then shall we practise a true devotion to the Precious Blood and prove ourselves its devoted lovers and promoters?

Well, we are to understand in the first place, that all devotions that have relation to God have of their very nature a primary and a secondary object. The secondary object of the devotion of the Precious Blood is the advancement of God's glory and the general well-being of our own souls. But the primary object of the devotion is fourfold, in accordance with the fourfold claims of adoration, gratitude, love, and expiation, that are its due.

We are to adore the Precious Blood, because, by reason of the substantial union of the Godhead with the Sacred Humanity in our Lord, that Blood has been made divine.

We are to pay to it the gratitude of our hearts, because the shedding of the Sacred Blood is the purchase price of our Redemption and the culmination of the benefits to us of our God.

We are to love this venerated object because the Sacred Blood, become the life of our souls in the Sacra-

ment of the Eucharist, is the supreme proof of Christ's everlasting love for us.

And, lastly, we are to offer it compassion, sacrifice, consecration and reparation; because of our union, I should rather say, of our identification with Jesus Christ as members of His mystical body.

3. I say, compassion, sacrifice, consecration, expiation; for those acts form the pith of the devotion, and are of its essence, and this chiefly is the mind and intent of the saints, the promoters of the devotion among men, and of the Church that authorizes and encourages it.

2. There is a mysterious sentence to be found in the writings of St. Paul, namely, that contained in the first chapter, twenty-fourth verse of his Epistle to the Colossians. He wrote the letter to the people of this city of Colossus from Rome, where he had spent three years in chains, a prisoner for the love of Jesus Christ. In this letter he says: "I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and I fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ in my flesh, for His body, which is the Church." Why does he rejoice in his sufferings for them? And what can be wanting in the sufferings of Christ that must be filled up by the sufferings of the disciple? And how can he identify the Church, i. e., the scattered body of the faithful, with the living Body of Christ?

Well, dearly beloved, all this comes from the great teaching which tells of the identity of the Head and Spouse of the Church with souls who form His living members. It comes further from the doctrine which

tells of the application of the merits of the Passion and death of Jesus Christ through the virtuous works of His disciples. What could be wanting in the plenitude of merits derived from the sufferings of Christ to be made up for by the sufferings of the faithful? There is this: *their application.* This is to be made by the faithful themselves through their virtuous actions and by their active charity one towards another.

In a word, when we received the Sacrament of Regeneration, we were united with the Saviour as members of His mystical body. He is the Head and Spouse of the Church. We are its members joined to Him by an incorporation which renders us divine and makes us sharers in His nature. O brethren, consider that dignity! By our union with Jesus Christ in Baptism we are, I say, in the words of St. Peter, made "a royal priesthood," and our function, as such, is to offer sacrifices in union with the Eternal High Priest, in homage to His Godhead, in expiation of the outrages that are committed against Him, and in atonement for the sins of men. And those functions of our priesthood, remember, are not to be considered by us as works of supererogation, to be performed by us, or left undone according to our choice and inclination. They are to be considered as strict duties, to which we are obliged by reason of our identity with the Eternal High Priest, Jesus Christ.

Consider further the sublimity of our vocation and the intimacy of our relations with our crucified Lord! Look upon that agonizing Figure hanging on the Cross! He is the central point of all duration, on

whom the Almighty from the days of eternity fixed His all-comprehending and interested gaze. "Jesus Christ yesterday, to-day, the same forever." See that open and lacerated side which gives entrance to the Sacred Heart. See that from it proceeds the placid tide of the most Precious Blood, through which the world was redeemed. Observe that rabble of frenzied men heap on Him outrages such as could be inspired only by hell.

Reflect that you, as a mystical member of that humiliated Head, and as a royal priest taking part with Him and identified with Him in the Sacrifice, are expected to share in His oblation and to bear your part in expiation of these outrages. You are to make up for the things that are wanting in the sufferings of the Victim and in order that the merits of His sufferings may be applied to the salvation, it may be, of this or that soul that is most active in heaping outrage on Him.

Or, consider the same pathetic figure as He was presented to the people by Pontius Pilate, covered with the Blood that trickled from His wounds, while the thorns of His crown are embedded deeply in His brain. It is your duty, as members of His mystical body, to stand by the agonizing Saviour and make up by your sympathy and expiatory sufferings what is wanting in the application of His merits to the relief of perishing souls. What part have you hitherto consciously taken in this office of joint victim for sin?

Brethren, compare your life with the thorn-crowned Figure before you. What likeness between

you and Him? While your fellow-Sacrificer is crowned with thorns, you crown yourself with the flowers of sensual delights. While He lies on the hard bed of the cross, you recline on the soft cushion of a pleasurable life. You drink of sweet wines, while He is compelled to taste of the bitter potion of vinegar and gall. What expiation do you make to the Victim for sin for the outrages of Pilate's Hall and the humiliations of Calvary?

Or, again, gaze upon that Figure hidden under the darkening shade of the olive tree in the Garden of Gethsemani. His arms lean heavily on the ledge of rock, while His face is raised in whole-hearted acceptance of the Chalice presented to Him by the chastening hand of His Father. His soul is plowed with anguish on account of sin. See, He accepts the bitter draught: "Father," He says, "not My will, but Thine be done," even though it bring Me down to the sorrows of death! O Lord! What part have we in the sublime submission of the Eternal High Priest, when we reject every cup to which we have repugnance, and follow our own will in everything.

Or, lastly, cast your eyes over the world as it appears before the outraged sight of God to-day. Travel over the continents and see the moral state of every city and people. We are now 1900 years after the preaching of the Gospel and the foundation of the Church. What are the results of Christ's labors, of His sufferings and death? Out of a world population of 1,700,000,000, perhaps 600,000,000 bear the name of Christian. But of those 600,000,000, half the num-

ber practise a mutilated form of Christianity, and of the remnant of 300,000,000 of Catholics, how many are so only in name? What is wanting to the suffering of Christ that is the cause of so meager a harvest of souls? And what efforts do you make to fill up in your own flesh what is wanting in the sufferings of Christ? Behold the insubordination of the peoples of to-day against the mild yoke of the Christian law. Their watchword is: "Let us break His bonds asunder, and let us cast His yoke away from us " And what are you doing, as a member perhaps of the Sodality of the Precious Blood, to assuage the disappointment of our Lord and to make reparation to Him for all those outrages?

But you will say, what *can* we do to stem the torrent of outrage against the Person and the law of God? Truly, "of ourselves we can do nothing," but "we can do all things in Him that strengtheneth us." United with Him, taking part in His sorrows, filling up in our crucified flesh what is wanting to the sufferings of Christ; this is, practising a true devotion to the Precious Blood. This is the true way of identifying ourselves as members of His mystical body with Him who is our Head.

See the priest at the beginning of the Mass, how he prepares the elements for the sacrifice. He prepares the wine of oblation, and into it he pours a few drops of blessed water. By the union of that water with the wine it becomes one substance with it, to be afterwards changed into the Blood of Christ by the words of Consecration. In the same way uniting our

lowly human intentions with the divine-human intentions of Jesus Christ, sharing His sorrows, discharging the functions of our "Royal Priesthood," our actions are made divine, share in the infinite efficacy of the actions of the Saviour and merit a like acceptableness with the Father.

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